

UNC Center for AIDS Research Newsletter

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



The mission of the UNC CFAR is to provide a multidisciplinary environment that promotes basic, clinical, behavioral and translational research in the prevention, detection and treatment of HIV infection.

September 2014

Volume 5, Issue 4

Dr. Joseph Tucker: HIV/AIDS Research and Mentoring Abroad



Our CFAR has a robust membership of doctors and researchers who work internationally to increase knowledge, decrease stigma, and provide care and support in the field of HIV/AIDS. This month, we connected with CFAR investigator Dr. Joseph Tucker, assistant professor at the UNC School of Medicine and director of UNC Project-China, to find out about his innovative efforts at developing social and biomedical research, and capable global scientists, to work on controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Tucker's research examines how major shifts in China's social and economic climate have resulted in the resurgence of syphilis, HIV, and other STIs. He has ongoing projects that focus on social entrepreneurship for sexual health and the social epidemiology of STIs. He lives and works throughout the year with his family in Guangzhou, the capitol of Guangdong Province, and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese. He is PI on an NIH Fogarty International Research

Scientist Development Award and serves as a mentor for trainees and junior investigators.

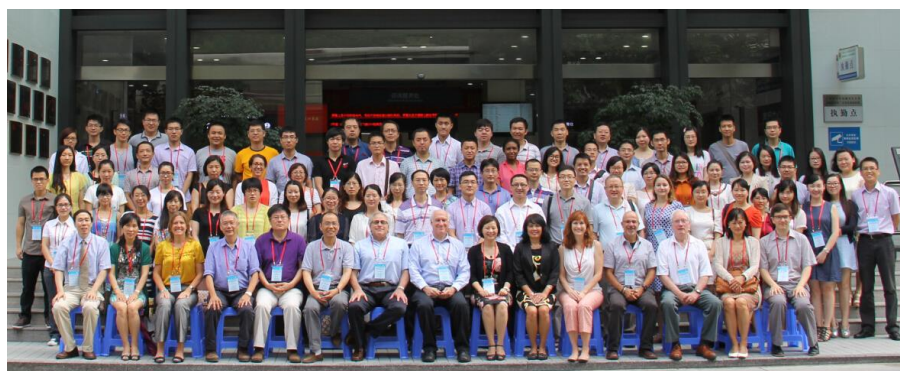
This past summer, Dr. Tucker facilitated the UNC-South China STD Research Training course (<http://chinastd.gdvdc.com/>) - an intensive, week-long training course that Tucker described as "fantastic because it provides a structured mechanism to support junior Chinese trainees interested in STD/HIV research". The training course included academic lectures on clinical science, epidemiology, and diseases prevention, as well as skills building workshops on grant writing, data collection, and project management. Tucker shared, "Despite the sweltering heat (one UNC professor said it felt just like home) and a packed agenda, there was great enthusiasm from both the China and UNC participants. We had a 360 evaluation that included participant evaluation, training faculty evaluation, and external evaluation. The consensus was that the training course exceeded trainee expectations and filled an important niche, catering to junior trainees who often do not have a chance

to attend international conferences or get an opportunity to receive guidance from UNC training faculty. The whole point of the training course was to jump start research collaborations between UNC training faculty and Chinese faculty and trainees. With the D43 (mentoring) grant, now we can have a far more reciprocal training experience that is beneficial for all involved." September 10th is "Teacher's Day" in China and the Guangzhou postdocs have organized a dinner in honor of Teacher Joe.

Dr. Tucker's work spans across the globe; his project **searchHIV: Social and Ethical Aspects of Research on Curing HIV** (<http://searchiv.web.unc.edu/>) is comprised of a multi-site, multi-disciplinary working group focusing on investigating the biosocial implications of curing HIV infection. They have three research sites, located in Cape Town, South Africa, Chapel Hill, NC and Guangzhou, China. Tucker explained, "From an anthropological perspective, there are substantial differences in the social context of HIV in the US, South Africa, and China."

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Faculty and students of the 2014 UNC-South China STD Research Training Course, organized and led by Dr. Joseph Tucker



Tucker shared, “For example, take civil society organizations. In the US, civil society organizations were leading the calls for accelerated HIV ART approval at the FDA and have played a pivotal role to push forward new HIV policies. In South Africa, there is also a strong civil society presence, but organized along different themes and strategies. In China, the development of civil society has been more complex, creating challenges in reaching and retaining key populations in some contexts.” The multiple study sites give his team opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons, which help in identifying intersecting themes about the unintended implications of HIV cure. Tucker’s research “hopes to take advantage of these cultural and social differences” as his teams analyze the social and ethical dimensions of cure HIV research.

The results of Tucker’s investigations can be used to assist HIV cure researchers as they create informed consent documents, design research studies, and continue HIV cure research. Tucker noted, “We are fortunate to have Professor David Margolis’s CARE team at UNC. They are an absolutely top-notch group, world leaders in the basic science and clinical aspects of HIV cure research. We are also excited to learn more about structuring community engagement on this topic and how to engage a broad range of stakeholders.”

A typical day for Dr. Tucker revolves around meetings with colleagues, mentees and teleconferences. While it converges in many ways with other HIV researchers, he says “I probably have a healthier dose of Chinese banquets, wonderful dim sum meals, and the like”.



Professor Beng Tin Boh teaching STD clinical skills at the STD Research Training Course in Guangzhou, China

North Carolina HIV/AIDS Advocacy Conference



The 2014 North Carolina HIV/AIDS Advocacy Conference drew over 150 people to Winston-Salem State University on September 6th to learn how to improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS and affected communities in our state.

Dr. Jacquelyn Clymore, North Carolina State HIV/STD Director in the Communicable Disease Branch of the NC Division of Public Health, offered insights on the latest epidemiological data in the plenary session, including a dramatic increase in new HIV cases among young African-American men. She also reflected on the huge changes that she has seen in decades of work in HIV and health: medical advances that would have seemed miraculous in the early days of HIV and AIDS, and new challenges that still cost the health and lives of too many people in our state.

Breakout sessions explored an array of issues that intersect with HIV and advocacy.

At the “HIV and Incarceration” session, experts from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, UNC, and the justice system discussed the parallel epidemics of HIV and mass incarceration and their effect on health inequalities. In the “Our Whole Selves: HIV, Faith, and Black MSMs” session, faith leaders and advocates from Triangle Empowerment Center and NCAAN Speaking Positively discussed the role of faith communities in AIDS advocacy, particularly in empowering Black MSMs. The Duke AIDS Legal Project and the Southern AIDS Strategy Initiative offered a session to provide updates on federal and state HIV policy and opportunities to take action. The Women’s empowerment panel convened female activists, leaders in syringe access and overdose prevention work, and voting rights advocates. The day also included time for attendees to connect with each other and share a meal.

The event was hosted by NC AIDS Action Network, NC Harm Reduction Coalition, and the Winston-Salem State University School of Health Sciences. It was sponsored by The Adam Foundation and the UNC-CFAR CODE Office, with major support from AIDS United and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. We hope to see you at next year’s HIV/AIDS Advocacy Conference!

SAVE THE DATE:
The NC AIDS Training and Education Center is hosting an Overview of Adult HIV Care for New Clinicians in Charlotte, NC on October 30-31, 2014. For more information, visit www.unccfar.org

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www.unccfar.org

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