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2010-11 YES Competition National Finalists

Research on Health Threats to Athletes Captures Year's Highest Honors

Sixty students from 22 states attended the eighth YES Competition the second weekend in April in Washington, D.C. This remarkable group of scholars investigated health problems affecting their communities, nation and the world. Many explored issues impacting teen health, from texting and driving to adolescent smoking, sports injuries, depression and sleep problems. The two \$50,000 Grand Prize scholarships went to students who conducted research on injuries among long-distance runners and on a major infectious disease affecting high school athletes.

Rebecca Leong, a senior at Columbia River High School in

Vancouver, Washington, was recognized for her study on injuries associated with the popular trend of barefoot running. "Barefoot running is capturing the attention of many people today," said competition judge Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, former Acting Surgeon General. "Ms. Leong has done some remarkable work in assessing injury in the categories of those who wear running shoes, those in the transition to barefoot running, and those who are barefoot runners."

Michelle Lee, a junior at North Allegheny Senior High School in Wexford, Pennsylvania, was recognized for her research on MRSA, a superbug infection

with a growing impact on high school athletes.

"Ms. Lee did an outstanding job in modeling the cost-benefits of screening athletes to identify those who may have this infection," said Dr. Moritsugu. [continued on page 2]

Important YES News

The April 2011 Young Epidemiology Scholars (YES) Competition in Washington, D.C. marked the eighth and final YES Competition. [Back cover]



2010-11 YES WINNERS: Research on Health Threats to Athletes Captures Year's Highest Honors



Top left: First Place winners Rebecca Leong and Michelle Lee. Bottom left: Dr. Howard Frumkin. Right: YES Finalists.

[continued from front cover] "It was a well thought-through model which determined at what point screening would be cost-effective," he added.

Guest speakers at this year's event included Dr. Harvey Fineberg, president of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; Dr. Howard Frumkin, Dean and Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at the University of

Washington School of Public Health; Dr. Michael McGinnis, Senior Scholar of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; and Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Secretary of Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. YES alumni Katrina Diaz and Jessica Hart also spoke.

This year, 562 students from 44 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia entered the YES Competition.

Sixty-five Semifinalists each received a \$1,000 scholarship. Forty-eight Regional Finalists received \$2,000 scholarships, while the 12 National Finalists earned scholarships ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000. To date, nearly 5,000 students have submitted research, and YES has awarded \$3.7 million in scholarships. Congratulations to all of this year's outstanding participants!



SCHOLAR PERSPECTIVES

YES has a tradition of inviting a scholar from the previous year's competition to speak at each National Event. This year, 2010 Second Place winner **JESSICA HART** shared her story with a packed ballroom during Friday's welcome dinner.



Jessica began by telling the audience about an email she received from the College Board that first introduced her to the YES Competition – and epidemiology. The subject line read: "Would you like \$50,000 in scholarship money?" Her first reaction was, "Epidemi-what? If I can't even say it, how in the world am I supposed to compete in this thing?"

Determined to pursue every opportunity to earn scholarship money, Jessica delved into the world of epi. In the process, she exposed a fertility problem affecting women in her own community, including her sister. Her study on the effects of lead and arsenic tailings in her neighborhood led her to Washington and a life-changing experience.

"Because I had never done an epidemiological study I was afraid I was going to be completely out of place." Instead, Jessica became more and more interested in epidemiology as the competition went on. By the time it was over, she felt like part of a family and was inspired to pursue epi in college.

"The weekend I spent with the YES Competition changed my life. This weekend is more than just a competition. It is something you will remember for the rest of your life." Jessica is currently pursuing a double major in epidemiology and music at the University of Rochester and Eastman School of Music.



2010-11 NATIONAL FINALISTS

\$35,000 Scholarships



- **SARAH HARDTKE**, Ossining, New York, "A Socio-Cognitive Model of Adolescent Depression: Underlying Mechanisms of Perceived Competency."
- **CAROLINE TREZZA**, Roslyn Heights, New York, "The Relationships between Academic Procrastination and Beliefs about Effort and Capability in High School Students."

\$20,000 Scholarships



- **CARLY BARKER**, Marshfield, Wisconsin, "High School Students' Attitudes and Beliefs towards the Risks and Benefits of Raw Milk Consumption."
- **GITA BHATTACHARYA**, Fullerton, California, "Wake Up When Your Ears Ring: Implications of MP3 Use for Tinnitus."

\$15,000 Scholarships

- **JAZMIN BRANCH**, Chicago, Illinois, "Analysis of Existing Disparities in Breast and Cervical Cancer among African-American and Latina Women."
- **NEEL KOYAWALA**, Gahanna, Ohio, "Sleep Problems and Suicide Attempts among Adolescents: A Case-Control Study."
- **MARY SUN**, Alexandria, Virginia, "Assessing the Role of Alcohol Use to Address Gender Differences in Adolescent Depression."
- **UDAYAN VAIDYA**, Denton, Texas, "A Novel Computational Framework for Modeling the Outbreak, Spread and Containment of Dengue Fever."
- **SARAH YAZJI**, Mercedes, Texas, "Family History, Diabetes Risk Perception, and Health Behaviors: Findings from College Students in South Texas."
- **ZIZI YU**, Woodbridge, Connecticut, "Investigating the Hygiene Hypothesis: A Case-Control Study of Food Allergies and Age of Food Allergen Exposure in High School Teenagers."

Dr. Harvey Fineberg congratulates National Finalists.



JUDGE

PERSPECTIVES

Each year, YES Competition judge **DENISE KOO** looks forward to learning about the issues teens care about enough to research.

"I enjoy learning what students pick to study and their insights into problems. I was impressed with the number of behavioral epidemiology studies this year," she said. "Behaviors influence health, and we're ahead of the game if young generations have this awareness."



Dr. Koo leads the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Scientific Education and Professional Development team, working with young epidemiologists to ensure they receive proper training. She recalls feeling frustrated as a medical student until she discovered public health. "I thought the experience would be more satisfying in terms of finding root causes to health problems but discovered doctors are trained to treat illness and not always to think about the larger picture." After finishing medical school she earned her M.P.H. and started a career in public health.

Dr. Koo advises students to discover their passion by exploring a wide array of areas in public health, from informatics and genetics to economics and social issues. "You can arrive at public health and epidemiology from so many different perspectives that if you find the approach you want to take, you will find a great career."

One issue she is deeply concerned about is the predicted shortfall in the public health workforce. "When people think of health, they think of healthcare and not public health. If we do our jobs well, we're invisible to the public." Dr. Koo is thankful for programs like YES that are raising awareness.

DR. KOO'S SUMMER READING LIST

Have some free time this summer and want to learn more about public health? Dr. Koo offers these recommendations for curious young epidemiologists.

THE MEDICAL DETECTIVES by **Berton Roueché**
Lively accounts of medical and epidemiological investigations from the mid-1940s to the late 70s.

BEATING BACK THE DEVIL by **Maryn McKenna**
The science journalist shares her experience shadowing the Epidemic Intelligence Service after September 11.

INSIDE THE OUTBREAKS by **Mark Pendergrast**
A riveting journey through the history of the Epidemic Intelligence Service since its founding in 1951.

HOUSE ON FIRE by **William Foege**
Part autobiography, part mystery, the story of how smallpox was completely eradicated in a triumph of medicine and public health.

YES Scholars are making headlines, with top news outlets reporting on this year's finalists and their research.

- **FOX TELEVISION** in Atlanta visited Regional Finalists Brittany Dodson and Manasa Bhatta at school, exploring their work on marianismo and teen texting and driving. YES judge Denise Koo joined to talk about supporting future public health leaders.
- National Finalist Gita Bhattacharya shared words of advice with the **ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER**: "Young people like to think we're invincible. But I found that if you play loud music and play a musical instrument, you are very susceptible to getting tinnitus."
- **CBS RADIO** in New York City examined National Finalist Caroline Trezza's research. "She noted that procrastination could be more than just a bad habit. She found that students' mental health could be affected by the psychological stress of putting tasks off."
- **THE CHICAGO SUN-TIMES** featured National Finalist Jazmin Branch. "Last summer, while other teens were working summer jobs, Branch worked fulltime on her research at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the American Cancer Society."



2010-11 YES Competition
Regional Finalists

YES Competition Concludes

YES was launched in 2003 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the College Board to encourage high school students nationwide to apply epidemiological methods to the investigation of public health issues and inspire the brightest young minds to enter the field of public health. Nearly 5,000 students from all 50 states have participated in the YES Competition, which has awarded \$3.7 million in college scholarships to 976 students, including this year's participants.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the College Board thank the many teachers, schools and public health professionals who have helped to make the YES Competition a success, and especially the exceptional students who have participated over the years. Their talent and commitment to improving the public health have been an inspiration. We look forward to seeing their contributions as they continue to do exceptional work in public health and advance the YES legacy for years to come. Examples of the exciting work being done by YES alumni can be found in the YES Newsletter archive at www.collegeboard.com/yes.

Some aspects of the YES program will continue in the near future, including the paying out of scholarship awards. There will also be continued opportunities for YES alumni to stay informed and engaged via the YES website, Facebook page, and new editions of the YES newsletter to be published later this year. In addition, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the College Board plan to commemorate the YES legacy later this year. Stay tuned to www.collegeboard.org/yes and upcoming YES newsletters for further details.