

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MDH and UMN to lead multistate study of primary care and public health

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and University of Minnesota (UMN) received nearly \$450,000 in grant funding to study how the integration of primary care delivery and public health services will benefit community health. The study will specifically look at the impact of this integration on health outcomes related to immunizations, tobacco use, obesity, and physical activity.

The three-year study, led by MDH and UMN Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, will collect data from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado and Washington. It will be the first study to quantify the degree and effectiveness of public health and primary care integration in these states.

“Minnesota and other states are facing increasing costs and suffering related to chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. It is clear that we cannot afford to just try and treat our way out of this problem,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Ed Ehlinger. “Instead, prevention is the answer, and that is why we’re very excited to partner with the University and explore the question of how doctors and public health officials can better join forces to promote health.”

Minnesota researchers will examine organization, finance, and delivery of public health services, along with the impact on community health.

Study aims include:

- Examine variation in the degree of primary care and public health integration across local jurisdictions.
- Identify factors that may contribute to or impede integration.
- Assess whether areas of increased integration have better health outcomes.

“Primary care and public health share a similar goal of health improvement and are uniquely positioned to play critical roles in addressing the complex health problems which exist in Minnesota and nationally,” said Macaran Baird, M.D., M.S., UMN Family Medicine and Community Health department head. “This collaboration provides an exciting opportunity to enhance our work together to achieve improved health outcomes for our citizens.”

MDH and the University of Minnesota received one of 11 new research awards totaling \$2.7 million. The awards, facilitated by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) with guidance from the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Services and Systems Research (NCC), are funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“In this era of health reform, it is imperative that we not forget that public health holds a key to improving the population’s health, a major tenant of the Affordable Care Act,” said Douglas Scutchfield, M.D., co-principal investigator of the NCC. “These grants will help us use research to further the efforts to develop public health’s capacity to perform in this changing health care environment.”

In Minnesota, this project will be managed by Beth Gyllstrom, Ph.D., M.P.H., MDH Office of Performance Improvement, and Kevin A. Peterson, M.D., M.P.H., UMN Department of Family Medicine and Community

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Health. Practice-based research networks representing public health and primary care in Colorado, Washington and Wisconsin are also participating in the project.

#### *About Our National Partners*

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

The goal of the National Coordinating Center is to grow the field of Public Health Systems and Services Research (PHSSR) by coordinating current PHSSR investments, supporting real-world applications and strengthening the capacity of researchers and practitioners. For more information, visit [www.publichealthsystems.org](http://www.publichealthsystems.org).

The National Network of Public Health Institutes convenes its members and partners at the local, state and national levels in efforts to address critical health issues. Learn more at [www.nnphi.org/re](http://www.nnphi.org/re).

#### *About the Minnesota Department of Health*

The Minnesota Department of Health's mission is to protect, maintain and improve the health of all Minnesotans. Learn more at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us).

#### *About the University of Minnesota Department of Family Medicine and Community Health*

The University of Minnesota Department of Family Medicine and Community Health was created in 1970 in response to a legislative mandate to train primary care physicians. Since then, the department has sought to improve the health of the people and communities of Minnesota and beyond and transform the specialty of family medicine through education, research, and patient care. Learn more at [www.fm.umn.edu](http://www.fm.umn.edu).

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