

INVESTIGATOR AWARDS IN
**Health Policy
 Research**

New Awardees To Explore Critical Challenges in Health and Health Care

The National Advisory Committee of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research recently completed its selection of this year's award recipients. Sixteen scholars affiliated with leading universities and research organizations across the country will receive a total of \$3.1 million to support 12 new projects. The award recipients are:

- Lori Andrews (Illinois Institute of Technology)
- Co-principal investigators David Blumenthal (Massachusetts General Hospital) and James Morone (Brown University)
- Philip Cook (Duke University)
- Dora Costa (National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., and Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Co-principal investigators Virginia Gray and David Lowery (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
- Daniel Greenberg (The Brookings Institution)
- Co-principal investigators Mary Clare Lennon and J. Lawrence Aber (Columbia University)
- Co-principal investigators David Rosner (Columbia University) and Gerald Markowitz (City University of New York's John Jay College)
- Dennis Scanlon (Pennsylvania State University)
- Michael Sparer (Columbia University)
- Mark Suchman (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Nancy Tomes (State University of New York-Stony Brook)

The investigators will address some of the most challenging policy issues facing America today as well as far-ranging concerns about the nation's health and health care system. Their topics include: public health policy; race and health; economic disadvantage and child health; consequences of alcohol taxation and control; consumer culture and American medicine; health care and the Presidency; gene patents; the commercialization of academic health research; private insurance purchasers and quality of care; new information technologies; state health care reform and intergovernmental relations.

This highly competitive program attracts investigators from a variety of disciplines, including medicine, nursing, public health, economics, sociology, political science, history, law, ethics, and public and social policy. Applications are reviewed by a National Advisory Committee of experts from fields similar to those of the investigators. Members of the 2002 National Advisory Committee included Alvin Tarlov, M.D., (Chair), Lawrence D. Brown, Ph.D., Richard G. Frank, Ph.D., Sherry Glied, Ph.D., James House, Ph.D., Lawrence Jacobs, Ph.D., Sherman James, Ph.D., Nicole Lurie, M.D., M.S.P.H., G. Madison Powers, J.D., D.Phil., Kevin A. Schulman, M.D., Stephen Shortell, Ph.D., Rosemary Stevens, Ph.D., M.P.H., William Vega, Ph.D., and Norman W. Weissman, Ph.D.

A National Program of
 The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

National Program Office:
 Rutgers, The State University
 of New Jersey

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy,
 and Aging Research

317 George Street, Suite 400
 New Brunswick, NJ 08901-2008

phone: 732.932.3817 ext.256

fax: 732.932.3819

email: depdir@ihcpar.rutgers.edu

www.ihcpar.rutgers.edu/rwjf

RWJF created the Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research in 1992 to enhance society's understanding of significant problems and policy issues related to the health and health care of Americans, to advance knowledge, and to provide information that could help improve the formulation of sound policies. Since 1992, the Foundation has supported 95 projects involving 118 investigators. According to David Colby, senior program officer at RWJF, "the Investigator Awards program has encouraged innovative approaches to an extremely broad range of topics, from social determinants of health to the organization of medicine."

The Investigator Awards program is led by David Mechanic, Ph.D., and headquartered at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. According to Dr. Mechanic, "this program brings together some of the nation's most talented investigators addressing in depth the most vexing issues affecting health and health care."

A brief description of each new investigator and project follows.



Lori B. Andrews, J.D.

Lori B. Andrews, J.D., Distinguished Professor of Law at the Chicago-Kent College of Law and Director of the Institute for Science, Law, and Technology at the Illinois Institute of Technology, has studied a wide range of bioethical issues, such as newborn screening, infertility treatment, cloning, stem cell research, and patent policy. For her Investigator Award project, *The Impact of Gene Patents on the Delivery of Health Care Services*, Professor Andrews examines how gene patents affect genetic research and the availability, cost, and quality of genetic tests and treatments. She will analyze the extent to which the current patent system encourages or discourages innovation. Professor Andrews will assess the growing number of challenges being mounted against gene patents in courts, legislatures, and administrative agencies, and will develop policy proposals to assure that intellectual property rights facilitate appropriate health care.



David Blumenthal,
M.D., M.P.P.

For their Investigator Award project, **David Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.P.**, Director of the Institute for Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital/Partners HealthCare System, Inc., and Professor of Medicine and Health Care Policy at the Harvard Medical School, and co-principal investigator **James A. Morone, Ph.D.**, Professor of Political Science at Brown University, take on the modern American Presidency. In their study, *Health Care and the American Presidency*, they examine how the actions or inaction of each President from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush have influenced the formulation and implementation of health policy in the United States. Using a variety of research techniques and models, Drs. Blumenthal and Morone expect to provide insights into the involvement of presidents in health policy issues and their role in the policymaking process. Their work should contribute to our understanding of the policy process and inform the activities of presidents, their staffs, other government officials, and stakeholders.



James A. Morone, Ph.D.



Philip J. Cook, Ph.D.

Philip J. Cook, Ph.D., is the ITT/Terry Sanford Professor of Public Policy Studies at Duke University. For his Investigator Award project, *The Health and Social Consequences of Alcohol Taxation and Control*, Dr. Cook will produce a broad and comprehensive account of the economic and public health effects of alcohol-excise taxation, age-based prohibition, advertising restrictions, and other control measures. The interesting history of alcohol control and the alcoholism movement will be developed as important background in understanding current debates. Other frameworks, especially those of economic theory and of public health, will be developed as alternative bases for characterizing the problem and what should be done about it. Tobacco regulation will offer an interesting point of comparison; tobacco and alcohol problems have much in common, but recent public policy approaches to these problems have differed. Finally, a set of recommendations about the appropriate level of control and taxation for alcohol will be developed and related to the evidence on consequences.



Dora Costa, Ph.D.

Economic historian **Dora Costa, Ph.D.**, is a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and a Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her Investigator Award project, *Race and Health across the Twentieth Century*, looks to the past to help us understand the factors that led to health differences between whites and African Americans. Dr. Costa will use various datasets that span the entire twentieth century and, for the early twentieth century, include selected populations, such as children born at Johns Hopkins Hospital and African American Civil War veterans. Armed with these data, she will examine health outcomes during the first 10 days of life, and again at middle and late ages. Her study will explore how differential access to technology and knowledge contributes to disparities in health status. By analyzing conditions such as heart disease, where significant technological advances have been evident, Dr. Costa will investigate the role of access to technology in outcome disparities. She will also consider how historical politics contributed to racial differences in access to clean water, sewage, and medical care.



Virginia Gray, Ph.D.

Over the past several years, the federal government and many states have considered ways to address insurance coverage gaps, prescription drug coverage, and problems with managed care. While most federal reform attempts to date have been thwarted, many more reforms have passed in the states. **Virginia Gray, Ph.D.**, Robert Watson Winston Distinguished Professor of Political Science, and **David Lowery, Ph.D.**, Thomas J. Pearsall Professor of State and Local Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, focus on interest groups in their project, *Against All Odds: Health Care Reform in the States*. Drs. Gray and Lowery examine why interest groups have been less effective at blocking health care reform at the state level than in Congress, and why many but not all states have been reformers. By looking at interest group structure in each of the 50 states and how they vary, Drs. Gray and Lowery expect to provide insights into the role that interest organizations play in the health policymaking process.



David Lowery, Ph.D.



Daniel Greenberg

Daniel Greenberg, a guest scholar at The Brookings Institution and a journalist and book author who has covered health policy and politics throughout his career, examines how commercial influences have affected people and programs in academic health research. His project, *The Impact of Commercialization on Academic Health Research*, takes a fresh look at the variety of effects — good, bad, and uncertain — that have arisen from mixing university science and commerce. In interviews and data collection, Mr. Greenberg will focus on the influence of commercial partners on academic research and training programs, effects on academic staff work time, job market value of campus-based commercial research experience, closeting of research data and materials, distortion of published research data, and erosion of public property rights in publicly financed research. His findings will highlight those areas where greater protection of the public interest is warranted.



Mary Clare Lennon, Ph.D.

Poverty takes its toll on health and development during childhood as well as in future life. **Mary Clare Lennon, Ph.D.**, Senior Research Fellow at the National Center for Children in Poverty and Associate Professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, and **J. Lawrence Aber, Ph.D.**, Director of the Center and Professor at the Mailman School, offer a new approach to measuring children's economic circumstances. In their project, *Dynamics of Economic Disadvantage and Child Health and Development*, the investigators focus on the economic trajectory of a child's family, exploring how the income of poor families changes over time, and how turning points in family life, such as unemployment, cohabitation, divorce, illness, and other events, affect family economics and child development. Drs. Lennon and Aber also examine how such health and social programs as cash assistance, food stamps, unemployment insurance, tax credits, Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and others lessen the severity of economic disadvantage. Their work should help identify children at risk due to family circumstances and policies that could reduce risk by helping families withstand economic downturns.



J. Lawrence Aber, Ph.D.

David Rosner, Ph.D.,
M.P.H.

Since September 2001, America's public health infrastructure has received more attention than at any time since the polio vaccination campaigns of the 1950s. **David Rosner, Ph.D., M.P.H.**, Professor of Sociomedical Sciences and History and Director of the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health at Columbia University, and co-principal investigator **Gerald Markowitz, Ph.D.**, Professor of History at the City University of New York's John Jay College, address the effects on the field of public health of new mandates and resources aimed at protecting Americans from bioterrorism. Their project, *The Un-Natural History of Public Health*, takes a fresh look at the history of public health and examines the U.S. experience with crises, disease, and mortality from the 1900s to the present. The investigators will consider the physical, political, and social changes that have affected the American experience of illness and death and the structure of public health services. Their work will provide a broad historical perspective and new insights for future public health policymaking.



Gerald Markowitz, Ph.D.



Dennis P. Scanlon, Ph.D.

Recent reports by the Institute of Medicine identify serious problems with the quality of health care delivery in America and look to public and private purchasers as catalysts for change. **Dennis P. Scanlon, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Administration and a health services researcher at The Pennsylvania State University, is interested in the extent to which private purchasers can stimulate major improvements in health care quality. His project, *Can Private Purchasers Cross the Quality Chasm? Learning from the Leaders*, examines the efforts of the Leapfrog Group, the National Business Coalition on Health's V8 group, the Midwest Business Group on Health, and several large corporate purchasers. All are engaged in purchasing initiatives that aim to foster market-based approaches to improving provider performance and delivering better and safer care to patients. By studying the leaders, Dr. Scanlon seeks to discover to what degree their efforts are achieving significant improvements in quality and whether alternative policy approaches are needed.



Michael S. Sparer, J.D.,
Ph.D.

For more than 200 years, policymakers have struggled over how best to balance power and divide labor between the federal government and the states. **Michael S. Sparer, J.D., Ph.D.**, Associate Professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, is interested in intergovernmental partnerships and the potential they hold for creating innovative policy and programmatic responses to health and health care problems. His project, *Inter-Governmental Health Care Partnerships: Promoting Innovation, Inefficiency, or Stalemate?*, will assess the advantages and disadvantages of such partnerships and examine whether power-sharing by different levels of government encourages or deters innovation. Through three case studies, Dr. Sparer will take a close look at recent balance-of-power shifts in federal regulatory, fiscal, and public health policy. These include federal actions aimed at playing a greater role in patient protection, increasing the discretion of states over Medicaid policy and program design, and an expanded federal role in public health protection as a result of the terrorist acts on September 11.



Mark C. Suchman, J.D.,
Ph.D.

Mark C. Suchman, J.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of sociology and law at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is interested in the many challenges American hospitals face as they introduce new clinical information technologies. His Investigator Award project, *Mapping the Organizational, Professional, and Legal Challenges of New Information Technologies in Healthcare*, examines patterns of technology adoption in hospitals and explores how the use of clinical information systems affects and is affected by shifting societal laws, rules, and norms. The investigation focuses on the role of new patient privacy and electronic data interchange regulations adopted by the federal government under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). In assessing the impact of these federal guidelines, Dr. Suchman will also explore the related effects of internal hospital governance structures and of external pressures from accrediting bodies, professional associations, and advocacy groups. The findings should inform policymaking in this rapidly developing field by mapping information technology governance and identifying key points of strength and vulnerability.



Nancy J. Tomes, Ph.D.

Intertwining of modern medicine and modern consumer culture in America has had both positive and negative effects on health and health care, according to **Nancy J. Tomes, Ph.D.**, Professor of History at the State University of New York-Stony Brook. In her Investigator Award project, *Impatient Consumers: Consumer Culture and the Making of Modern American Medicine*, Dr. Tomes studies medical autonomy and authority, patients' demands for services, and the tension between professionalism and commercialism. Although market competition and the explosion of available health care information have led to increased options for patients seeking medical care, Dr. Tomes suggests that consumerism has also produced confusion, undercut medical advances, and contributed to the persistence of unequal access to care. Taking a historical perspective, beginning before the advent of antibiotics and sophisticated technology, she analyzes a range of issues that arose during the twentieth century — from modern medicine's limitations to curb lifestyle-related and chronic illnesses to the explosion of health-related Internet sites and direct-to-consumer drug advertising.

Stay Tuned

The results of these and other projects funded through the Investigator Awards program will appear in future issues of this publication. For more information about the program and its investigators, please visit our web site at www.ihhpar.rutgers.edu/rwjf or contact the National Program Office by email at depdire@ihhpar.rutgers.edu.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Established in 1972, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas:

- to assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost;
- to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions;
- to promote healthy lifestyles and communities; and
- to reduce the personal, social, and economic harm caused by substance abuse — tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

To order additional copies of New Awardees To Explore Critical Challenges in Health and Health Care, contact the National Program Office of the RWJF Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research at 732.932.3817, ext. 256, or depdire@ihhpar.rutgers.edu.