

## **Society for Prevention Research**

Founded in 1991, the Society for Prevention Research (SPR) is dedicated to advancing scientific investigation on the etiology and prevention of social, physical and mental health, and academic problems and on the translation of that information to promote health and well being. The multi-disciplinary membership of SPR is international and includes scientists, practitioners, advocates, administrators, and policy makers who value the conduct and dissemination of prevention science worldwide.

The original idea of forming an organization that would bring together the diverse prevention research community was incubated during the late 1980's and early 1990's in a series of discussions among National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) administrative staff. An agreement on forming a new professional organization was reached at a 1991 meeting of NIDA-sponsored prevention research center directors and NIDA staff in Pittsburgh. Led by NIDA staff members Zili Sloboda and Bill Bukoski, 19 researchers attended this meeting. By the spring of 1992, SPR was incorporated as a non-profit organization in the state of New York.

During its first four years, the membership of SPR comprised researchers whose work focused on the etiology, epidemiology, and prevention of drug abuse. Ongoing and vigorous support from NIDA made the growth and consolidation of SPR possible, and Zili Sloboda and Bill Bukoski continued to play key roles in the organizational effort. Ralph Tarter and colleagues at the Center for Education and Drug Abuse Research in Pittsburgh provided central administrative support. Richard Clayton sponsored several important organizational meetings in Lexington, KY, and Steve Schinke served as the first president of SPR.

The first SPR conference was held in Ft. Collins and was organized by Gene Oetting of the Tri-ethnic Center at Colorado State University. The first official "annual" meeting was held the next year in Lexington and was organized by Clayton and colleagues at the Center for Prevention Research at the University of Kentucky. For several years following this meeting, SPR linked its meetings to the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD) meetings, and met in West Palm Beach, Scottsdale, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Tarter served as chair of each of these meetings.

During 1997, under the direction of President Clayton, the SPR leadership joined with members of the 1996 National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) conference planning committee to create a SPR annual meeting incorporating multiple themes, including bio-behavioral mechanisms underlying drug and alcohol abuse, methodology for conducting preventive trials, cutting edge methodology for analyzing preventive trial outcomes, the causes and prevention of aggressive behavior, and early career researcher training. Numerous federal agencies provided financial support for this meeting in Baltimore, including NIDA, the NIMH Office of Prevention, the NIMH Office of AIDS Research, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Following the Baltimore meeting in 1997, efforts were continued to broaden the focus of SPR. Led by President Karol Kumpfer and then again interim President Clayton, the SPR Board of Directors expanded to include representatives from various constituencies, including members of former NIMH National Prevention Research conference planning committees. A representative of the Early Career Preventionists Network (ECPN), an Internet-based group of researchers at the beginning of their prevention science careers, was also included.

In 1998, the first elections by the full membership were held, with Sheppard G. Kellam, the first president and Gilbert Botvin the first president-elect voted into office by the now rapidly growing membership. As the organization grew, a new mission statement and organization structures were needed. New bylaws were drafted and approved by the membership in 1999, establishing the broad SPR mission as encompassing the full arena of prevention science in public health, with a continuing focus on its historical base in drug abuse and mental health. Under President Kellam, the hybrid organization that came together during and following the Baltimore meeting was strengthened and expanded.

This work continued under the leadership of President Botvin, with a particular focus on strengthening the administrative, organizational, and governance structures of the organization. In 2001, a new office for SPR was established in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and a new executive director, Jennifer Lewis, was hired. In 2003, through bylaw amendments, the ECPN was established as a standing committee of the SPR and the ECPN chair became an ex-officio, voting member of the board. Since then, subsequent presidents, including J. David Hawkins, Anthony Biglan, Zili Sloboda, and Linda Collins, have continued to expand the scope and capacity of the organization. Most recently, in 2009, the Diversity Network Committee (DNC) was created through bylaw amendments. The DNC is a standing committee and its chair is an ex-officio, voting member of the board. Governance changes such as these were intended to actively engage the involvement of early career prevention researchers, underrepresented minority researchers, and other important constituencies in the SPR.

As SPR has grown, the organization has created new institutions and processes intended to build the field of prevention science at large. The first was the annual meeting. This would not have been possible initially without the strong support of NIDA, and later a variety of other groups, including NIMH, NIAAA, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. However, as the organization grew in size and scope, funding a multidisciplinary conference became a significant challenge. A variety of strategies were adopted to deal with this challenge, including the writing of conference grants. In 2001, under the leadership of President Kellam, C. Hendricks Brown and J. Mark Eddy, SPR was awarded a five-year R13 conference grant based with the NIMH to support the annual meeting, with contributions from NIDA, NIAAA and the National Cancer Institute. In 2005, under the leadership of President J. David Hawkins, Tony Biglan, and Richard Spoth, SPR was awarded a five-year continuation R13 grant, this time based with NIDA, with contributions from NIMH, NIAAA, NCI, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. In 2010, the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention joined as funders to the grant.

The second was the launching of a journal dedicated to the science of prevention. The first edition of the SPR flagship journal, *Prevention Science* (published by Plenum which was acquired by Kluwer, and which was later acquired by Springer), was released in the spring of 2000, with Gilbert Botvin, as editor. In 2007 Robert McMahon became the second editor of the journal. In the eleven years since its inception, the journal has grown in importance in the prevention science community and established itself as the premier journal for the field of prevention. The journal's most recent 2-year Impact Factor (for 2009) is 3.018, which places it 7th out of 95 journals in its category (Public, Environmental, and Occupational Health). The first 5-year impact factor was received in June 2010, which is 3.750. The success of the journal is due to the editor, associate editors, the editorial board, reviewers, and to the authors who submit articles.

In recent years, SPR has produced a variety of documents focused on important topics in the field of prevention science. These include the *Standards of Evidence: Criteria for Efficacy, Effectiveness and Dissemination* and the *Community Monitoring Systems: Tracking and Improving the Well-Being of America's Children and Adolescents* which were funded with support from the NIH through the National Science Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The *Community Monitoring Systems* document was re-published by NIDA and received wide-spread distribution.

SPR publications are often developed through ad hoc committees. One important set of committees was established through support from the second five-year R13 conference grant, the SPR Mapping Advances in Prevention Science (MAPS) task forces. These transdisciplinary task forces address high-priority and emerging issues facing the field. The two MAPS established in the past five years are *MAPS I Biological and psychosocial* (Diana Fishbein, chair) and *MAPS II Type 2 Translational Research* (Richard Spoth and Luanne Rohrbach, co-chairs). The work of the task forces takes place throughout the year holding mini-conferences, providing information and consultation to federal agencies, and developing programming for the annual meetings including preconference workshops, plenary sessions and roundtable discussions. The MAPS Type 2 Translational Research Task Force has

produced several documents including “*Type 2 Translational Research: Overview and Definitions*” and “*Type 2 Translational Research: Position Statement, A Call for Bold Action to Support Prevention Programs and Policies to Achieve Greater Public Health and Economic Impact*”. These and other documents are available on the SPR website at [www.preventionresearch.org](http://www.preventionresearch.org).

Traditions are an important part of any field. Over the past decade, several events have been initiated that have become annual meeting traditions. In 1999 at the annual meeting in New Orleans, the ECPN established its annual ECPN Luncheon, which provides programming to build skills tailored for early career researchers. In 2002 at the Annual Meeting in Seattle the first annual SPR Minority Scholarship Dance was held. The “Mothers of Prevention” band was formed in 2003 through the leadership of J. David Hawkins, Gilbert Botvin and Brian Bumbarger. The band performs at the annual dance, which is a fund raiser for travel awards awarded to minority prevention researchers attending the meeting. The Sloboda and Bukoski SPR Cup, named for two of the leaders who helped start SPR, Zili Sloboda and Bill Bukoski, was established by J. Mark Eddy and Charles R. Martinez, Jr. at the annual meeting in San Antonio in 2006. The SPR Cup is a friendly competition among teams of researchers which highlights and celebrates the work of prevention scientists who are early in their careers. The Diversity Network Reception was established in 2006 by program chair Felipe Gonzalez Castro to provide an evening of fellowship and networking opportunities for SPR’s diverse membership, as well as to provide opportunities to identify others interested in research on race, ethnicity, and culture, and prevention. In recent years, SPR’s NIH partners have established an early Thursday morning workshop to disseminate grant opportunities of special interest to SPR and ECPN meeting attendees.

The most recent SPR contribution to the field is the expansion of the SPR web presence and the establishment of an on-line publication. The inaugural issue of the Society’s newsletter *SPR Community* (Hanno Petras, editor) was published in the spring of 2011. Over the past two decades, the community of SPR members has grown from 19 to over 700. Annual meeting attendance typically includes over 750 prevention researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

The Board of Directors of the Society for Prevention Research would like to thank the membership of SPR and the countless volunteers over the past two decades who have ensured the success and longevity of the Society and in doing so have advanced prevention practice and policy through science.