

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

news release

Release Date: November 1, 2011
Contact: Julie O'Connor
Voice: 313-577-8845
E-mail: julie.oconnor@wayne.edu

Wayne State University receives \$1.7 million from NIH to develop a computer-delivered intervention for drug use among at-risk post-partum women

DETROIT — A team of researchers at Wayne State University's Parent Health Lab in the School of Medicine have developed a novel indirect screener that identifies women at risk for drug use by evaluating correlates of illicit drug use rather than drug use itself. In phase I testing, this new screener proved to be more sensitive than any alternative approach at detecting recent drug use. The team of researchers also developed a brief, computer-delivered intervention for behavioral change motivation that does not presume drug use.

Now, with a new \$1.7 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health, **Steven Ondersma, Ph.D.**, associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences in WSU's School of Medicine and the Merrill-Palmer Skillman Institute, is leading a team of researchers to continue development and use of the screener, known as the Wayne Indirect Drug Use Screener (WIDUS). He and his team will also begin a formal trial with 500 at-risk women at Hutzel Hospital to evaluate the efficacy of a unique computer-delivered intervention that intends to motivate women to quit or reduce drug use without presuming that drug use is present.

According to Ondersma, many women who use drugs during or after pregnancy are hesitant to disclose that use — for good reason. "This study could identify and help at-risk women, regardless of their comfort with disclosing drug use," said Ondersma.

In addition, Ondersma's use of a wholly computer-delivered model will help to make this a logistically feasible, replicable and low-cost approach that is far-reaching, ultimately having a widespread impact on providing brief interventions to at-risk post-partum women. If successful, this approach will also have a dual benefit through its indirect effects on at-risk children, including improving safety and stability, as well as behavior, health and school readiness. "If we are successful, this new approach could give health care systems the ability to help far more at-risk women than was previously possible," said Ondersma.

###

Wayne State University is one of the nation's pre-eminent public research universities in an urban setting. Through its multidisciplinary approach to research and education, and its ongoing collaboration with government, industry and other institutions, the university seeks to enhance economic growth and improve the quality of life in the city of Detroit, state of Michigan and throughout the world. For more information about research at Wayne State University, visit <http://www.research.wayne.edu>.