

# Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging & Longevity



## NEWSLETTER

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**Marianne C. Fahs, PhD, MPH**  
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### Brookdale Partners with the NYC Department for the Aging on Healthy Indicators Project

New York has undertaken a major three-year program to improve the quality of life for the city's older adults, and the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging and Longevity is playing a central, leading role.

The program, known as the Healthy Indicators Project, is a joint initiative of the Brookdale Center, the city's Department for the Aging and the United Hospital Fund, with Marianne C. Fahs, who is Brookdale's Rose Dobrof Co-Director, serving as project director. Brookdale will also draw on the resources of Hunter Schools of Nursing, Social Work and Health Sciences.

The project is designed to assess the effectiveness of New York's aging-services network and the ways in which it promotes healthy urban aging. Over the course of its three-year life, the project will gather data from the city's 325 senior citizen centers and its 34 NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities).

The goal will be to develop measures to prevent or delay the onset of the chronic conditions that diminish the quality of life through pain, disability or the loss of functions. Among the measures under study are screening for breast and prostate cancer, management of diabetes, falls prevention and osteoporosis prevention.

Dr. Fahs, who in addition to her director's position at Brookdale, serves

as a Professor of Urban Public Health at Hunter, said, "We at Brookdale are especially pleased to take a leadership role in this vital and exciting project. Until now, there has been very little understanding of the health status of the hundreds of thousands who visit senior citizen centers. We have always known that they were there, yet no one has conducted a systematic study of their health status and their aging process with the goal of developing responsive programs."

Dr. Fahs added, "There is a great deal of national interest in this project, and so we know that it will raise Brookdale's and Hunter College's visibility as a center of excellence on aging."

Hunter President Jennifer J. Raab hailed the launch of the project, saying, "We are pleased to be working with the Department for the Aging and the United Hospital Fund on this important effort to help future enhance the Department's position as a pioneer in healthy urban aging. New York City has already been recognized by the Administration on Aging as a truly livable community, and this initiative will further enhance the city's efforts to meet the needs of its growing senior population."

The Department for the Aging works with more than a third of New York's 1.3 million citizens over the age of 60. About 250,000 seniors regularly attend one of the city's senior citizens centers, and some 13,000 seniors participate in the 34 NORCs.

## Fahs Named to Mayor's Committee on Healthy Aging

Marianne C. Fahs has served on New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Advisory Committee on a Vision for Healthy Aging in New York City since late 2007. The Mayor has asked the committee – which includes representatives from the medical, academic, government, private and non-profit worlds – to draw up a plan to make New York “a model city comprised of communities that are characterized by their ability to support and engage people as they age.”



Among the topics that Dr. Fahs and her colleagues on the Mayor's Advisory Committee have considered are:

- Engagement (the interaction between the elderly and the various public and private organizations that relate to them)
- Mobility, particularly public transportation
- Housing, including affordability, quality and design
- Health and Wellness, including access to services and information, and end-of-life care
- Integration and Coordination, including collaboration, planning and accountability among the agencies that deal with the elderly.

Among other recent local assignments Dr. Fahs has accepted are the Mayor's Workgroup on Health and Wellness Centers, and the Citywide Planning Summit on Strategies for Modernizing Aging Services in New York City. Moreover, in 2007 Dr. Fahs was appointed to serve on the New York State Governor's Statewide Advisory Councils on Long Term Care, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and Senior Centers.

## Look to Brookdale's Nina Parikh for Insights on Immigrants

For generations, immigrants have flocked to New York, and how well or badly they have fared has usually been measured in social and economic terms. But what about other important metrics, like health or quality of life? For answers to those questions, look to Brookdale Senior Research Associate Nina S. Parikh, who is emerging as one of the city's foremost experts on conditions in immigrant communities.

Dr. Parikh recently completed a major study funded by a \$57,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation assessing the impact of multi-level factors on immigrants' health care. The 18-month-long project used data from a federal survey of 8,600 legal adult immigrants and their children to look at a broad array of issues that affect their access to and use of health care facilities.

Preliminary results, which are being prepared for publication, reveal that several immigration-related factors were important predictors of how well new immigrants gain access to and make use of health care services. Controlling for other demographic and economic variables, the factors include country of origin, distress during the immigration process, the type of visa, the region of the U.S. to which the person migrated, and whether English was spoken in the home.

These and other related findings will increase understanding of the myriad considerations that affect immigrants' health trajectories and point the way to policies and initiatives to improve their access to services.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Assessment of Emergency Preparedness of Adult Care Facilities

How well prepared are New York City’s 63 adult care facilities (ACFs) to handle a major emergency, in particular a serious natural disaster? How well do they handle the garden-variety emergencies that crop up now, from stuck elevators to summer heat waves?

Those are among the questions that a team of researchers from the Brookdale Center are finding the answers to under a two-year grant totaling more than \$200,000 from the city’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

The results could be crucial in saving lives in the event of a major emergency. One of the most significant findings of the first-year survey is that several adult care facilities in Queens, especially those that are concentrated in the Rockaways, are vulnerable to flooding in the event of a major storm, due to their location in low-lying coastal areas.

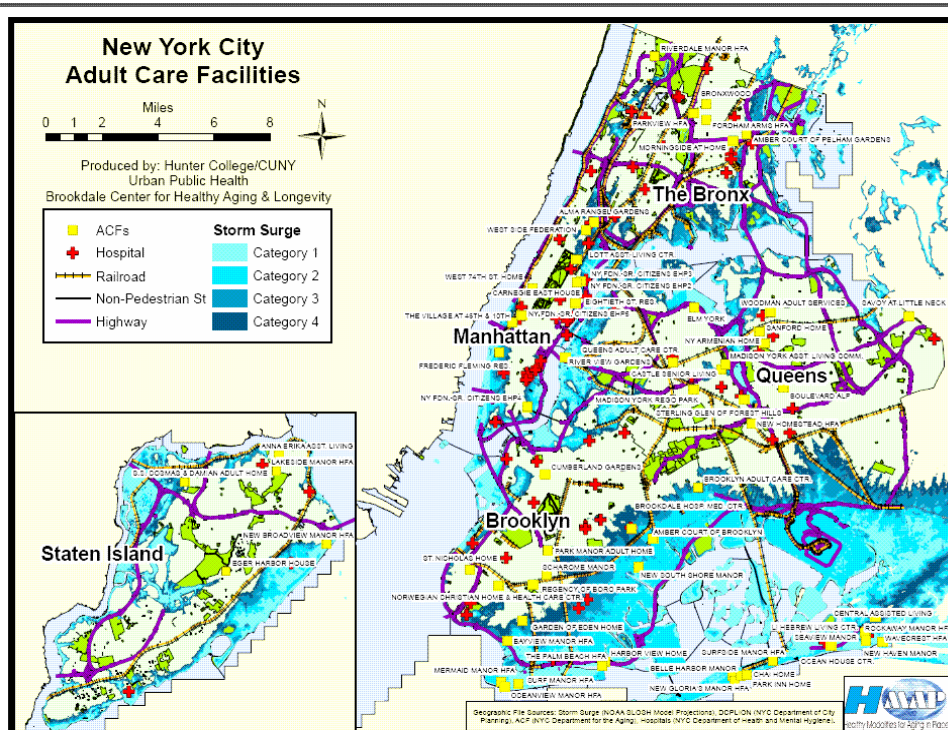
The Brookdale team has prepared a detailed map showing the location of each of the Queens ACFs and its vulnerability to ocean surges, from storm categories 1 through 4. The findings are expected to have a significant impact on evacuation planning and preparedness.

The team, which is led by Matthew Caron, MS, used focus groups – all of which were conducted with pledges of strict confidentiality to ensure cooperation – and written surveys to assess the capabilities of the ACFs to cope with problems large and small.

During the second portion of the grant covering calendar year 2008, the Brookdale team focused on how well prepared the ACFs are to handle an influenza epidemic.

ACFs provide housing and routine care for people who are ambulatory and able to function in most respects. Many of the residents work during the day but return to the ACF for the comfort and assistance the group home provides.

ACFs range in size from a handful of residents to 20 or so. Two-thirds of the city’s ACFs are proprietary, and the balance are run by nonprofit organizations.



## Look to Brookdale's Nina Parikh for Insights on Immigrants (Continued from Cover Page)

The Robert Wood Johnson study is one of several in which Dr. Parikh has participated in this field. In fact, she often finds herself balancing similar projects simultaneously.

She is part of the Brookdale team that is partnering with the United Hospital Fund and the New York City Department for the Aging on a three-year integrated research and demonstration initiative. It is a project with far-reaching implications. Older adults present a growing challenge to urban policy-makers who want to allocate resources in ways that will promote healthy aging. What Dr. Parikh and her colleagues produce will provide policy-makers with their first insights into the factors influencing the health needs of New York City's older adults.

The Brookdale component will determine how New York City can turn senior citizen centers into working alternatives to traditional health care settings. The results will enable senior centers to deliver programs in such important areas for the elderly as self-managing diabetes, preventing falls, engaging in healthy physical activity and screening for breast and prostate cancers.

As part of a five-year project for the National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute assessing the effectiveness of programs to promote healthy behavior among Chinese Americans, in particular smoking programs, Dr. Parikh and colleagues have been involved

in two significant publications using these data, which represent the first population-based study to examine important health behaviors of Chinese immigrants residing in the U.S. One article examined the demographic and socio-economic predictors of protective and risk practices, including physical activity and smoking among older adults.<sup>1</sup> The second publication examined the correlates of body mass indexes of Chinese adults.<sup>2</sup>

Impressive as all these projects are, they describe only a portion of the academic research Dr. Parikh has done in the related fields of aging, health and immigration.

Nina Parikh earned her BS in biology and sociology from John Carroll University, a MPH in health policy management from Emory University, and her PhD in socio-medical sciences from Columbia.

Of her experience at Brookdale, she has this to say: "It is an ideal place for me to explore my interests – examining the health needs of older immigrant populations – as it is one of the premiere centers in the country focused on aging and it's located in one of the most diverse cities in the world."

<sup>1</sup>Parikh NS, Fahs MC, Shelley D, Yerneni R. Health Behaviors of Older Chinese Adults in NYC. *J of Community Health*. Oct 2, 2008. [Epub ahead of print]

<sup>2</sup>Yeh M-C, Fahs MC, Shelley D, Yerneni R, Parikh NS, Burton D. Body Weight and Length of Residence in the US Among Chinese Americans. *J of Immigrant and Minority Health*. 2007 Dec 18 [Epub ahead of print].

### Council of Senior Centers and Services of New York City, Inc.

presents

#### The Power of Aging: Uncovering The Opportunities in Change

20th Annual Conference on Aging  
& Vendor Exhibition

Sponsored by EmblemHealth™

A conference for community-based providers, policy makers and consumers  
to help them build their capacities to provide better service to seniors.

**Thursday, January 29, 2009**  
**8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**The Grand Ballroom**  
New York Hilton Hotel at Rockefeller Center  
1335 Avenue of Americas (between 53rd and 54th Streets)

Via Subway:  
B, D, F, V to 49th Street/Rockefeller Center  
1 or 9 to 51st St. & 7th Ave.  
N, R, W to 49th St.

Via Bus:  
Any route along Avenue of Americas  
(Uptown)  
Any route along Broadway or  
7th Avenue (Downtown)

The Consortium of  
New York  
Geriatric Education Centers

### CAREGIVING: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Examine caregiver roles from yesterday and today; teamwork strategies  
for successful caregiving; assessment strategies; kinship care;  
flourishing caregiving programs, approaches, and resources; and  
self-care for the professional caregiver.

#### Location:

Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging & Longevity  
425 East 25<sup>th</sup> Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
Training Room  
New York, NY

#### Registration fee:

Single training days: \$50 each  
Limited scholarships available

#### How to register:

Go to [www.nygec.org](http://www.nygec.org) and click on *Registration* and then  
choose the appropriate elective. Or, contact Brenda Rodriguez  
at (212) 998-5618 or [Brenda.rodriguez@nyu.edu](mailto:Brenda.rodriguez@nyu.edu)