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**North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund and Duke Global Health Institute
seeking applicants for Health Disparities fellowships**

RALEIGH, NC - The North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) released its application for the 2010-2011 NC Health Disparities fellowship, a program engaging talented public health and social work professionals in ongoing efforts to help close the health disparities gap in the state. The project is funded and directed by the HWTF as part of its statewide Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative. HWTF has allocated \$23.6 million towards the overall initiative, which includes 23 community grants and a multi-media campaign. HWTF is partnering with the Duke Global Health Institute to manage the fellowship.

The two-year fellowship program aims to increase awareness of health inequalities in North Carolina by enabling a group of mid- to senior-level public health or social work professionals to effectively design, implement and evaluate interventions that address these complex issues. The new class of fellows will complement HWTF's first class of fellows, all of whom have begun working on health projects in their communities.

"We are proud of our first group of fellows for taking on the challenge of addressing health disparities through effective community-based and statewide projects, and we are pleased to be able to offer the fellowships once again," said Vandana Shah, HWTF Executive Director. "Engaging talented professionals in the effort to increase the cultural competency of health care providers is vital for closing the health disparities gap."

The program includes four modules of classroom instruction led by faculty at Duke University, North Carolina Central University, and East Carolina University during the first year. Duke faculty mentors also assist fellows with the development of a community-based project to be implemented in the second year of the program.

"What I like most about this fellowship is the wisdom, passion, and energy that the faculty gave that challenged my intellect so that I could deliver needed services to my community in a more thoughtful way," said Crystal Dempsey, a 2009-2010 NC Health Disparities Fellow.

Data from the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities at the NC Department of Health and Human Services shows that Hispanics, African Americans and American-Indians are three times more likely to be living below the federal poverty level than whites, a factor related to many health disparities. The infant mortality rate and deaths related to diabetes are two times higher for these minority groups than their white counterparts. The NC Health Disparities Fellowship educates its fellows about these very topics, and helps them find creative ways to combat these issues in their communities.

Those interested in the NC Health Disparities Fellowship may apply online at HWTF's Health Disparities Initiative website at: <http://www.caretoactnc.com/HDFellowship.aspx>. The deadline for submitting applications is October 21, 2009. All mid- to senior-level public health or social work professionals are welcome to apply.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

ABOUT THE DUKE GLOBAL HEALTH INSTITUTE

The Duke Global Health Institute addresses health disparities in our local community and worldwide. Recognizing that many global health problems stem from economic, social, environmental, political and health care inequalities, DGHI brings together interdisciplinary teams to solve complex health problems and to train the next generation of global health scholars. <http://www.globalhealth.duke.edu>

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