

Member Update ~ February 2007

Dear Colleagues:

The young field of injury and violence prevention continues to grow; responding to the prevention needs and the acute and long-term burden of a staggering array of events. As it grows, so does the need for solid research and quality researchers that utilize a range of rigorous scientific methods and disciplines to identify risk factors and trends, inform public policy, and guide and evaluate effective interventions. That is what SAVIR is all about. To accomplish these goals SAVIR seeks to:

- Help unify, organize, and create a visible identity for researchers working across the many disciplines involved in injury and violence research;
- Promote professional development and networking for injury and violence researchers;
- Improve the teaching and mentoring of the next generation of injury researchers;
- Maintain and promote strong links between the scientific, academic, public health and medical communities working in the field;
- Coordinate exchanges between researchers and practitioners and policymakers;
- Advocate for evidence-based injury and violence prevention programs;
- Advocate for increased funding for injury and violence research.

SAVIR's uniqueness stems from the challenge of promoting cohesion, shared knowledge, collaboration and an integrative approach between groups and individuals working in different specialties across the spectrum of injury prevention and control research. To that end, we now have a year of building the organization toward that mission. Let me mention a few highlights:

- Established a formal partnership with Injury Prevention, now SAVIR's official journal.
- Updated the member organization project bank.
- Let a contract to develop a dynamic new website that will serve as an external marketing and communication tool as well as handle membership, financial and other back-end organizational needs.
- Concrete plans for an upcoming 2007 research conference in Columbus Ohio on October 10 & 11.
- Conducted strategic planning on mission and priority activities.
- Successfully proposed to the IOM the establishment of a "roundtable" to promote increased understanding of the efficacy of injury research.
- Funded the development and distribution to state and federal public policy makers of a print briefing about the value of investing in injury and violence research.

While looking back we can be pleased, our challenge now is to synchronize our aims and aspirations with available resources. This is not an easy task. With the unexpected shortening of our CDC/NCIPC cooperative agreement, it has meant reorganizing the DC office, the departure of our able and full-time executive director Bill O'Connell, and the need to adopt a combined growth and survival strategy that depends on cutting expenses while simultaneously looking for opportunities to invest in the future.

From a broad viewpoint, SAVIR has had the start-up resources that many new professional research organizations would envy. But without membership growth, clear benefits to existing and prospective members, and new sources of revenue, we will not be the organization we would all like it to be.

Bottom line; we face two major challenges:

1. Can we recruit enough people to be actively involved in the cause of an umbrella injury researcher organization?
2. Can SAVIR thrive long enough to become the key umbrella organization for those people?

With less resources at the central organizational level, our success now depends on members volunteering and actively participating in SAVIR's committee structure. The committees are where much of the work of the organization will get done and how its leadership will be informed of progress. I urge all members to look at the committee structure and join one or two today. And while you are doing that, please download two member applications and the new member brochure and sign up two of your non-member colleagues now.

Researchers spend a large part of their lives in a state of confusion. It's an occupational hazard, really. To excel in research is to embrace doubt while walking the winding and bumpy road to clarity. The tantalizing discomfort of perplexity is what inspires otherwise ordinary men and women to extraordinary feats of ingenuity and creativity. But en route to explanation — during our search for new frameworks to address exceptional questions of life and death — we must tread with caution through a jungle of bewildering data, guided mostly by hunches, inklings, clues, and calculations. Discoveries often bear little evidence of the arduous terrain that's been covered. But we must not lose sight of the fact that nothing comes easily: The human condition does not give up its secrets lightly. But when research does lead to discovery, it often provides the tools and the means to make extremely important things happen in people's lives.

— Borrowed from Brian Green (Fabric of the Cosmos, 2004)

Fundamentally, taking valuable time to work for SAVIR so that SAVIR can work for you is also about choosing to make something happen. The future is not a roulette wheel that we sit back and watch as uninvolved spectators. It's a matter of work. Lots of hard work; by you, by me, by all our members and partners. By doing so, through our own work, our own professions and the unifying promise of this particular organization, we can ensure that the future outcomes in injury and violence prevention are the ones that we all desire.

Yours Truly,
Hank Weiss PhD, MPH, President