

NEWS

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NIMH FUNDS PROJECT TO DEVELOP MULTIMEDIA VERSION OF HIV MEDICATION ADHERENCE PROGRAM FOR SOUTH AFRICA

New York – December 17, 2007. The Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL) is partnering with researcher Robert Remien of the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies on a two-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to adapt and pilot test a multimedia version of a proven HIV treatment adherence program. The addition of technology will support lay counselors in South African HIV care clinics implementing the program with limited training and supervision while ensuring greater standardization.

The project, "Multimedia Social Support Intervention: Adherence to HIV Care in South Africa," is modeled on SMART Couples, a drug adherence program that has been shown to be effective in New York City clinics by Dr. Remien and his HIV Center team. The current project, known as SMART+SA, will support counselors at health clinics in Cape Town in assisting HIV-positive adults to adhere to their antiretroviral drug regimens through a combination of education and social support. CCNMTL will work with a consortium of Columbia and University of Cape Town researchers and local community members to determine the appropriate role of technology for the project.

"Our partnership with CCNMTL provides us with a very exciting opportunity to engage technology experts, academic researchers, clinicians, and community consultants in a collaborative effort to create a user friendly and culturally appropriate program that can be readily 'scaled-up' if shown to be effective in our study," said Dr. Remien. "Teaching and training tools such as the ones we are developing are greatly needed in Sub-Saharan Africa and other resource poor settings coping with very high rates of HIV among the general population."

SMART+SA is part of CCNMTL's Triangle Initiative and will be used to enrich Columbia courses in Public Health and Social Work. "The Triangle Initiative strives to extend the application of the University's research both into the classroom and the larger community," said executive director Frank Moretti. "The community we serve is the community of humanity, and the SMART+SA project is our first effort to extend our work to those in Africa suffering from HIV/AIDS."

About the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL)

CCNMTL's mission is to enhance teaching and learning through the purposeful use of new media and technology. We form partnerships with faculty, providing them with as much support as they need in everything from the construction of course Web sites to the development of advanced projects. We are committed to remaining a leader in our field, engaging our faculty partners in the reinvention of education for the digital age.

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