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FOR RELEASE: May 31, 2006, 10:30 A.M. CST

Editor's Note: The following research will be released at the Society for Prevention Research (www.preventionresearch.org) annual meeting, May 31-June 2, 2006, Hyatt Regency, San Antonio, TX.

CAN MAPS HELP US UNDERSTAND HEALTH PROBLEMS?

Using GIS to understand health disparities

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technologies are revolutionizing health care, as they allow researchers to analyze the influence of place on health. Research has long shown that people with lower incomes and people of color face greater health risks – but now researchers are able to see exactly how the characteristics of minority and low-income neighborhoods contribute to these health disparities.

- **How are health researchers using GIS technology to untangle the relationships between health, ethnicity, income, and neighborhood characteristics?**
- **What role does ‘place’ play in murder rates, child maltreatment, and preventable hospitalizations?**

This symposium at the Society for Prevention Research (SPR) Annual Meeting will provide an overview of the technological advances in this field and present three papers on diverse health issues:

Preventable Hospitalizations – African Americans in California are twice as likely as Whites to be hospitalized for chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma – all conditions that have been shown to be manageable through good primary care. Researchers will discuss the role played by the shortage of health care facilities in disease prevalence, hospitalization, and mortality from preventable chronic conditions in the greater Los Angeles area.

Malt Liquor and Homicide – This major study of enterprise zones in 10 U.S. cities examines the impact of malt liquor availability on the murder rate among African Americans. Researchers from the University of Minnesota established the number and density of liquor stores and the availability of this potent drink in thousands of Census block groups in these impoverished African American neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods and Child Maltreatment – Child abuse is tangled in racial and poverty issues, and may be linked to impoverished neighborhoods as well. Over half of all cases of child maltreatment are associated with neglect, which is often linked to an inability to provide children with the basic necessities. This study of children in California compares neighborhood characteristics with maltreatment rates for African-American, Latino, and white children. The researchers wanted to know whether neighborhoods that lack the resources to provide basic necessities are linked to greater risk for children. They also explore whether factors such as the number of liquor stores are linked to child maltreatment, and whether this differs for children of different ethnicities.

Sources: Paul Gruenewald, Ph.D., Prevention Research Center; Bridget Freisthler, Ph.D., UCLA; Emily Bruce, Ph.D., San Jose State University; Barbara Needell, Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley; Paul Robinson, Ph.D., Kevin Heslin, Ph.D., Melanie Rodriguez, B.S., Richard Baker, M.D., Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science.

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