## ExCEL in Social Work

Excellence in Cancer Education & Leadership

Rebecca Block, PhD, LCSW, and Caroline Macuiba, LCSW, OSW-C
ExCEL in Social Work Awards
Shirley Otis-Green, MSW, ACSW, LCSW, OSW-C
Senior Research Specialist
Rebecca Block (left); Caroline Macuiba (right)



ExCEL in Social Work has completed its third year of courses, and trained over 300 social workers. We had an amazing group of nearly 100 dedicated professionals and are looking forward to many more success stories in the future. Annually we recognize participants from the past year's courses who demonstrate outstanding goal achievement. The ExCEL 2013 AOSW honorees are Rebecca Block and Caroline Macuiba.

The Award of Excellence was presented at the AOSW Conference in San Diego, CA which included a plaque and \$1,500. This year both awardees are from Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). Rebecca Block, PhD, LCSW, is one of only a few PhD-prepared social workers engaging in research in adolescent and young adult oncology. She is currently working on studies related to psychosocial outcomes, mental health, and fertility preservation decision-making. The synergy of life experience, clinical and research skills, and connection to social and professional community continues to inspire, motivate, and move Dr. Block in all of the work she does. Caroline Macuiba, LCSW, OSW-C, is an oncology social worker and supervisor of adult oncology social workers at OHSU. She has been practicing medical/oncology social work for 14 years and has been at OHSU for more than six years.

Shirley Otis-Green. Can you tell me more about your ExCEL change project?

Rebecca Block and Caroline Macuiba. Our goal was to develop a standardized algorithm to assess patients for depression and get them to the appropriate intervention based on evidence-informed practice. We first reviewed the literature and determined what factors most impact a person prone to depression. We researched depression screens and decided the <a href="CES-D">CES-D</a> was most appropriate for our setting. The CESD-R is a screening test for depression and depressive disorder. The CESD-R measures symptoms defined by the American Psychiatric Association' Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) for a major depressive episode. We then developed a screen involving questions related to history of mental illness, history of substance abuse, and quality/quantity of social support. We have completed a pilot coupling those three questions with the CES-D to

determine a patient's need for treatment of depression and whether they need no intervention, are to be followed closely by oncology social work, or be directed to more intensive therapy or psychiatry.

**SO:** How were you able to accomplish your goal after attending the ExCEL course last year?

**RB/CM:** As a team we met once a month to discuss what we'd each worked on the month before and discuss next tasks and steps to take to get toward our goal. We created reminders to ourselves to conduct the screening with appropriate patients.

**SO:** ExCEL is a leadership development program. Tell me more about your leadership activities this year.

**RB/CM:** We presented our project at the Oncology Social Work team meeting, and collaborated with the manager of Patient and Family Support Services about progress toward our goals. In addition, we are currently having ongoing discussions about how this project may inform the development and implementation of cancer center wide distress screening.

**SO:** In what ways was participation in ExCEL useful?

**RB/CM:** It highlighted the importance of standardization of screening and interventions for our practice. It also created a unique opportunity for collaboration between social work faculty research staff and clinical providers. Finally, the project provided us validity in implementing standardization based on evidence.

**SO:** What do you see for your future?

**RB/CM:** We see this as a catalyst for development and implementation of evidence-based screening, assessment, and intervention not only for depression but all psychosocial challenges patients face.

Additionally, our completion of this project demonstrated to mentors and supervisors the value of the ExCEL program. We are looking forward to taking what we learned both from the ExCEL training and our individual project into our future projects.

**SO:** We asked for self-nominations for this award. How was that for you?

**RB/CM:** A bit awkward. As social workers, we're not used to promoting ourselves, but we are glad we did!

The last <u>ExCEL in Social Work courses</u> will be offered in Philadelphia, PA (April 21-22, 2014) and Baltimore, MD (May 26-27, 2014) immediately preceding the APOSW and the AOSW Annual Conferences. For further information, browse the ExCEL in Social Work website and complete an application. Please email <u>ExCEL @coh.org</u> with any questions.