

**UCSF's Response to Community Criticism of the Initial Press Release
Regarding the UCSF MRSA Study Published in January 2008:
An Overview Prepared by Shane Snowdon, Director, UCSF LGBT Center***

UCSF's Immediate Response to Criticism Received

- On January 18, 2008, UCSF revised the press release that engendered intense criticism, published a statement on its home page “deplor[ing] the negative targeting of specific populations in association with MRSA and other public health concerns,” and distributed the statement and revised release to 20+ media outlets, including the *New York Times*, which featured both on January 20.
- The press release’s author, former UCSF Public Affairs staffer Wallace Ravven, wrote an apology to Michael Petrelis, who had criticized the release. Petrelis published the apology on his website on January 18.
- The MRSA study’s lead author, UCSF post-doc Binh An Diep, emailed the *Bay Area Reporter* an apology for comments from cited in the press release: “I deeply apologize for offensive jargon I truly regret my mistake I hope that you can help me in communicating my deepest apology to the community.” His apology was published in the *BAR* on January 24.
- Senior MRSA study author Henry Chambers, MD, of UCSF appeared at the first community forum held to discuss the study on January 22, and answered multiple questions about it.
- Dr. Chambers, UCSF LGBT Center Director Shane Snowdon, and UCSF Community & Government Relations staffer Kieran Flaherty attended the second MRSA community forum, held at the SF LGBT Center on January 30 and co-sponsored by UCSF. In a scheduled talk, Snowdon expressed UCSF’s regret about the initial press release, decried all-too-frequent media portrayals of gay men as “disease-carriers,” said that UCSF was creating a review process for future press releases, and promised intensified programming around gay men’s health. A podcast of her remarks was posted on the STOP AIDS website.
- On February 4, a MRSA community working group inspired by the January 30 forum held its first meeting at STOP AIDS, informally led by Rick Loftus, MD. Snowdon attended this meeting, and subsequent weekly meetings of the group, until its informal disbanding six months later. The group’s work included:
 - distribution of accurate MRSA information in the UCSF gay communities, in print and via meetings, in collaboration with the SF Public Health Department
 - a detailed critique of media coverage of the study sent to the *Chronicle*, other media, and GLAAD
 - meetings with GLAAD about development of a gay men’s health media toolkit
 - picketing of the *SF Chronicle* and a meeting with its editors on March 12
 - development of a video about the press release, and MRSA and gay men in general
- Also on February 4, UCSF Associate Vice Chancellor Barbara French emailed an extended apology for the MRSA release to *SF Weekly*, and it was published soon after.

- On February 5, French, Dr. Chambers, Snowdon, and Flaherty met with Clinton Fein, Michael Petrelis, and Hank Wilson (Hank later attended MRSA working group meetings) at UCSF about the MRSA press release; they were joined by Assistant Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs Aimee Levine. Results of this meeting were posted on Fein's and Petrelis's websites, as well as in an extensive MRSA blog created by Snowdon on the public website of the UCSF LGBT Center.
- After the meeting, Snowdon developed a list of UCSF commitments with respect to gay men's health; she posted this list on the Center website, and updated it through June.
- On February 13, Snowdon and Flaherty attended a meeting of the SF Board of Supervisors about MRSA and the press release. Snowdon expressed UCSF's regret, and joined several Supervisors in a videotaped "informational hand-washing session" featured on local TV news programs. (At the UCSF meeting, Petrelis had suggested such a video.)
- On February 15 and 27, French convened meetings of all UCSF Public Affairs staff at which she and other managers disseminated a revised process for covering research related to the LGBT communities. This process, developed in several meetings of UCSF Public Affairs leadership, has been followed since.
- On February 21, Snowdon published a letter in the *BAR* summarizing much of the information above.
- Snowdon maintained the MRSA blog on the LGBT Center until June, featuring all of the information above, plus extensive links to MRSA information. This blog was extensively visited, having been publicized to the 500 gay men on UCSF's LGBT listserv and via other online resources.

UCSF's Subsequent Response to Criticism Received

- Soon after the February 4 meeting, UCSF engaged longtime gay men's health advocate Chris Bartlett to hold a special session in San Francisco of the Gay Men's Health Leadership Academy that he developed with the late gay men's health leader Eric Rofes. Working with several Bay Area gay men's health advocates, Bartlett presented the San Francisco Gay Men's Health Leadership Academy, in conjunction with the UCSF LGBT Center, on May 31. Sixty diverse gay men's health activists attended the day-long session, and gave it extremely positive evaluations.
- From June 2008 through June 2009, the UCSF LGBT Center funded and co-developed, with the SF LGBT Center and STOP AIDS, EdgeTalk: A Queer Men's (S)wellness Series. All events were held at the SF LGBT Center, and publicized extensively via local LGBT print publications, online resources, and widely distributed postcards and flyers. The first program, a panel on social marketing featuring UCSF meeting attendee Petrelis and others, was publicized in an editorial in the *BAR* and via postcards distributed at SF Pride. Subsequent EdgeTalk sessions included a panel on FTM queer men's health, a presentation and discussion of the Black Gay Men's Health Agenda, a panel on MSM crystal meth use led by gay health activist Michael Scarce ("Does It Give You Wings?"), a panel on gay men's tobacco use, a workshop by Manifest Love founder David Nimmons, a presentation on gay

men's sexual pleasure by Steve Goldstone, MD (author of *The Ins & Outs of Gay Men's Sex*), and an intergenerational gay men's workshop led by Chris Bartlett.

- The UCSF LGBT Center also held on the UCSF campus a number of additional gay men's health programs, all open to the public at no charge and publicized in print and online. Offerings included additional workshops by David Nimmons and Dr. Goldstone, two intensive sessions on gay men's health by Dr. Loftus, a presentation by Bartlett on the National Gay Men's Health Agenda, a film and discussion on gay men's body image, two workshops on gay men and aging, and a gay men's film series kicked off by a new documentary on Harry Hay.
- UCSF placed a number of prominent ads in the *BAR* to publicize the existence and services of the UCSF LGBT Center, in order to facilitate LGBT community interaction with UCSF. These included a full-page ad on the inside front cover of the *BAR*'s Pride issue, for maximum visibility. Community response was very positive, and local gay men's contact with the LGBT Center has increased significantly since.
- In the last year, the UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS), which conducts the vast majority of UCSF research related to gay men, has significantly increased the number of "town halls" held in its offices for anyone interested in CAPS's work. In addition, all CAPS research from 2001 onward is detailed and posted prominently on the CAPS website: <http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/research/>. Hank Wilson, an attendee at the February MRSA meeting at UCSF, was a member of the CAPS community advisory board until his death, and CAPS leadership talked with him extensively about strategies for maximum community involvement in the wake of the MRSA press release (although the MRSA study was unconnected to CAPS).
- The UCSF LGBT Center has made 40+ presentations on LGBT health, with extensive material on gay men's health, since January 2008. Settings have included medical schools, HMOs, hospitals, and medical professional conferences.
- The UCSF LGBT Center has energetically sought to track UCSF studies of gay men's health outside CAPS, i.e., in clinical areas. As discussed in the February meeting, these studies are very few in number (CAPS conducts the great majority of gay men's health research at UCSF), take place in widely varying settings on UCSF's extremely decentralized campus, and are led by researchers with varying UCSF affiliations. Nonetheless, the LGBT Center has been able to identify several such studies, and has facilitated community involvement with them. The task of identifying UCSF studies involving specific groups will be hugely facilitated by the database being developed by UCSF's Clinical & Translational Science Institute (CTSI). The primary goal of CTSI, a major new undertaking, is to develop even stronger community links with UCSF researchers, which CTSI staff are happy to facilitate: <http://ctsi.ucsf.edu/>
- The UCSF LGBT Center has convened two significant LGBT health conferences since January 2008, both publicized and open to the public:
 - the nation's first LGBT health conference for graduate health students, in January 2009, featuring Dr. Loftus on gay men's health
 - UCSF's first LGBT Health Research Symposium, featuring the work of CAPS and UCSF's other LGBT health research units, in October 2009

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