

2008 Outstanding Researcher Award

Janice C. Probst

An Outstanding Researcher is one who understands theory and methodology and, as a result, is able to produce academically excellent work. Dr. Probst is a “first class methodologist with the ability to tease out the nuances of complex research problems” and is a pioneer in rural minority research. Dr. Probst, however, also goes much further - not only is her work incredibly useful to non-academics in the field, but Dr. Probst is also noted for her mentorship of young researchers.

Dr. Probst has been a major contributor to health services research at the national and state levels for over thirty years. She is currently the Director of the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center, the only federally funded center focusing on vulnerable rural poor and minority populations, and has served in a leadership role since the Center’s inception. Dr. Probst was one of the first rural health researchers to utilize economic arguments in making the case for rural hospital support, and her groundbreaking efforts were a precursor to the increasing interest in the relationship between the availability of health services and economic development in rural communities.

Dr. Probst is widely recognized by her peers as a leader in rural health research and nowhere is that leadership more apparent than in her work on rural minority populations. She was one of the first researchers to explore the issues experienced by populations that encounter both rural and minority health disparities.

Since 2000, research conducted by Dr. Probst and under her direction has significantly expanded knowledge concerning rural populations, their health risks and the interventions that may benefit minority populations. With her fellow researchers, she has addressed disparities experienced by rural minority populations across the spectrum from maternity care through childhood and adulthood, with topics ranging from access to care to use of mental health services. Dr. Probst has forthcoming work addressing key issues such as how rural hospitals are handling low English proficiency Hispanic patients and the contribution of community health centers and rural health clinics to access to effective primary care. Dr. Probst’s example has drawn other researchers to the field of rural health and her mentorship has inspired many to pursue the topic of health disparities. Through her own work and through her influence on other rural health researchers, Dr. Probst’s passion will continue to blaze the trail of rural health research.