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Office of University Communications

December 14, 2012

Savanna Yount Discusses the Importance of Proper Diagnosis of Postpartum Depression

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Like all undergraduate students, Savanna Yount had her fair share of class projects, homework, and research papers. But while most students are happy to say goodbye to a project once it is complete, Yount was more than willing to take hers to the next level. *The Clinical Advisor*, a widely read magazine for nurse practitioners and physician assistants, has selected Yount's student article on postpartum depression (PPD) to be featured in its December 2012 issue.

"Publishing a scholarly paper as an undergraduate is a big deal at this or any university," said Dr. James Morgan, Associate Professor of Psychology and Counseling at Gardner-Webb, who originally gave Yount the assignment in his psychopathology class. Morgan, along with fellow professors Dr. June Hobbs, Dr. Gregory Davenport, and Dr. David Carscaddon, supported and guided Yount in the publication of her essay.

Yount is also excited about this unique opportunity. "It's awesome that I get to be published," she said. "I didn't think about that when I started the assignment. I was just doing it for a class." The paper has certainly come a long way since then, having been presented by its author at scholarly conferences like Gardner-Webb's "Life of the Scholar" conference and Alpha Chi Honors Society's national convention, both in 2012.

"I chose a topic that not a lot of people want to think or talk about," said Yount. The article, which focuses on how PPD is diagnosed and handled between mothers and primary care physicians, highlights the lack of efficiency in PPD's diagnosis as well as possible solutions for remedying both the condition and its oversight in primary care settings.

According to Yount's research, physicians often overlook PPD in their patients, as it is normal for women to experience hormonal and behavioral changes upon giving birth. In order to clarify the difference between depressive and normal states, Yount suggests that doctors screen expectant mothers for depressed feelings or histories of depression. Furthermore, treatments like antidepressant medications, psychotherapy, and exercise are suggested to prevent the onset of depression following birth.

"I'm just really hopeful that people will look at it and have the information in the back of their minds," said Yount. "Maybe the physician assistants and nurse practitioners that are looking at it will be able to better diagnose their patients and say, 'Wait, maybe we need to talk to this mother a little more.'"

Yount graduated from Gardner-Webb in May 2012, but is looking to attend the University's new Physician Assistant (PA) graduate program starting in 2014. Working in that field, Yount will likely be able apply her research throughout her career, making a difference where it is needed.

The Clinical Advisor is a monthly journal read by 41,000 physician assistants and over 88,000 nurse practitioners. Articles like Yount's help practitioners stay up to date on diagnoses, treatments, and preventions in primary care settings. Yount hopes that as more qualified people read the article, more will be done to address the oversight of PPD diagnoses in new mothers.

For more information on PPD in the primary care field, contact Dr. Morgan at jmorgan@gardner-webb.edu or check out Yount's article at www.clinicaladvisor.com.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for career success and for engaged, responsible citizenship in their professional, civic, and spiritual communities.