NEWS FROM AROUND THE NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

AWARDS AND HONORS

Abrania Marrero-Hernandez, Doctoral Student, presented some of her team’s work at the American Society for Nutrition's annual conference, Nutrition 2019, in Baltimore, Maryland on June 8th-11th. Along with her poster presentation, Abrania participated in the Young Minority Investigator Oral Competition and was the Grand Prize Winner! The title of her presentation was "The association between intentionally purchasing local food products and diet quality among adults in Puerto Rico."
Abrania’s work would certainly not have been possible without the guidance of her mentor Dr Josiemon Mattei, the Donald and Sue Pritzker Associate Professor of Nutrition, Martha Tamez, and the research team and participants of the Puerto Rico Assessment of Diet, Lifestyle, and Diseases (PRADLAD).

Jean-Philippe Drouin-Chartier, Postdoctoral Fellow, was awarded a young Investigator Travel Grant Award from the American Diabetes Association as well as a Travel Award from the Harvard Chan Postdoctoral Association to participate in the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 2019 Scientific Sessions.

Aviva Musicus, Doctoral Student, Department of Nutrition, Professor Eric Rimm, and others have published a paper in the American Journal of Public Health on June 20 about Boston Medical Center’s rooftop farm and its integration with their cafeterias, teaching kitchen, and food pantry.


For its 5th year in a row, the SYMPOSIUM ON OMICS, ADVANCES, APPLICATIONS, AND TRANSLATION IN NUTRITION AND EPIDEMIOLOGY, chaired by Dr Frank Hu, Professor and Chair, and Dr Miguel A Martinez-Gonzalez, Adjunct Professor, was held with the participation of investigators from both sides of the Atlantic. This year it took place at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health on May 17, 2019. These symposia allow continuing collaborative work between the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, the University of Navarra (Spain), the Broad Institute, and the University of Reus (Spain) in studies of metabolomics, dietary intervention trials, and the risk of cardiovascular disease or diabetes. The four previous symposia took place in Navarra (2015), Boston (2016 & 2017) and Barcelona (2018). In the present symposium (2019) one of the hottest topics was the plan for a future grant developed by Dr Miguel Ruiz-Canela, former visiting scholar at our Department (June-December, 2018), to include a multi-omic approach for diabetes prevention in the context of the PREDIMED-Plus ongoing trial.

Jean-Philippe Drouin-Chartier, Postdoctoral Fellow, gave an oral presentation at the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 2019 Scientific Sessions (June 7 to 11) titled “Changes in Consumption of Sugary Beverages and Artificially Sweetened Beverages and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes among U.S. Women and Men”. Co-authors of this study are: Yan Zheng, Yanping Li, Vasanti Malik, An Pan, JoAnn Manson, Walter Willett and Frank Hu.

Jean-Philippe Drouin-Chartier, Postdoctoral Fellow, gave another oral presentation at the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 2019 Scientific Sessions titled “Changes in Dairy Product Consumption and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes among U.S. Men and Women”. Co-authors of this study are: Yanping Li, Andres Victor Ardisson Korat, Ming Ding, Benoît Lamarche, JoAnn Manson, Eric Rimm, Walter Willett and Frank Hu.

Areli V Caballero-Gonzalez, Research Assistant, gave a poster presentation titled “Cultural Perceptions of Healthy Eating in the Latino Multiethnic Population in Boston, MA” at the American Society for Nutrition’s annual conference, Nutrition 2019, in Baltimore, Maryland on June 8th-11th.
New Faces in the Department!

Andrea A Lopez Cepero Coira
Postdoctoral Fellow

Andrea is a postdoctoral fellow under the Nutrition Training Grant, who will be working with Dr Josiemer Mattei. She earned a B.Sc. in Cellular Molecular Biology from the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras and a master’s degree in Health Sciences and Nutrition from the University of Puerto Rico-Medical Sciences Campus. In collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS), Andrea’s master’s thesis evaluated differences in dietary quality between Puerto Ricans residing in Massachusetts and in Puerto Rico. She then obtained a Ph.D. in Clinical and Population Health Research from UMMS. Her doctoral work focused on understanding how psychosocial stressors and stress-related eating behaviors (i.e., emotional eating) influence cardiometabolic conditions in Latinos, as well as adapting a behavioral weight loss intervention for low-income post-partum women. In addition to this, Andrea’s Ph.D. thesis explored associations between psychological and physiological stressors and glucose metabolism in Puerto Ricans residing in the Greater Boston area. As a postdoctoral fellow in the Nutrition Department, Andrea will continue to explore how psychosocial stressors influence emotional eating, dietary intake and cardiometabolic conditions in Latinos in order to uncover and develop innovative approaches for disease prevention.

Claudia F Martinez
Visiting Graduate Student

Claudia is a nutritionist/dietitian from México. She obtained a B.S., MSc. in Nutrition and a Diabetes Educator Diploma from the University of Guadalajara, México. Currently, she is in her fourth year of her Doctorate in Population Nutrition Sciences at Mexican National Institute of Public Health (INSP). In México, Claudia worked at the Mexican Civil Service Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE) and as professor at University of Guadalajara.

Claudia joined to Professor Josiemer Mattei’s research team as a visiting scientist. Her doctoral project is focused in patterns of meal frequency and weight change and incidence of diabetes in a cohort of Mexican Teachers (ESMaestras) Follow-up Study (>100,000 participants followed since 2006).

Claudia’s main research interests are lifestyle, diet patterns and outcomes as weight change, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular risk factors in population-based studies. She is also interested in expanding her research to genetic markers and diet. Another professional facet of hers focuses on nutrition and diabetes education programs based on different theories of behavior change.

In the personal area Claudia loves cats, ice cream, parmesan cheese and coffee. She also likes to read and go to the cinema.
Jessie Powell  
Research & Administrative Coordinator to the Chair

My name is Jessie and I am very excited to be a part of this amazing team at HSPH. I moved to Boston from Richmond, Virginia in 2012. My family moved a lot so I have also lived in Texas, Connecticut, Maryland, Illinois, and Minnesota. I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond with a degree in Community Health Education. I moved to Boston to start working for Benchmark Senior Living, and had various administrative and managerial roles with them. After going back for my MBA I decided that I wanted to change industries and move away from senior living. I loved my residents, staff, and families, but I was looking for a positive change. And that’s when I found HSPH! The atmosphere and culture is so different here and I am absolutely enjoying every minute! Everyone has been very nice and welcoming, and I look forward to getting to know all y’all more (that’s Texan for all of you 😊).

I am a big animal lover and I currently have two Siamese fur babies. I enjoy hiking, kayaking, camping, and really anything out in the woods.

I am a HUGE Patriots fan (don’t worry I was a fan before I moved here) and I also enjoy the Red Sox (although I secretly root for the Baltimore Orioles too).

Faculty and Research Scientist Appointments

Xuehong Zhang, MD, ScD, has been appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition. Dr Zhang is a cancer epidemiologist with medical training. He is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Channing Division of Network Medicine Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School. He has over ten years experience in conducting cohort and case-control studies and international consortia. He integrates epidemiology, nutrition/lifestyles, pathology, and –omic techniques to conduct multidisciplinary investigations. Dr. Zhang has received funding from the National Cancer Institute and American Cancer Society. He is passionate about teaching and mentoring, and offers guest lectures in courses at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Kirsten Davison, PhD, has been appointed Adjunct Professor of Nutrition

Changzheng Yuan, ScD, has been appointed Adjunct Assistant Professor of Nutrition

Elsie Taveras, MD, MPH, has been reappointed Professor in the Department of Nutrition. Dr Taveras has established a record of scholarship in two areas: 1) epidemiologic analyses of risk factors for childhood obesity across the lifecourse, with an emphasis on examining racial/ethnic disparities and 2) translating epidemiologic evidence into clinical and public health innovations to prevent and manage obesity and its sequelae. Dr Taveras has also been appointed as a member of 2020 USDA Dietary Guidelines Committee.

Vasanti S. Malik, ScD, has been reappointed Adjunct Assistant Professor of Nutrition

Dr Kjetil Bjørnevik has been appointed Research Scientist in the Department of Nutrition.

Dr Shilpa Bhupathiraju has been reappointed Research Scientist in the Department of Nutrition.
MORE NUTRITION NEWS

High Amounts of Ultraprocessed Foods Shown to Increase Risk of Premature Death from Any Cause

In the Spanish SUN cohort ("Seguimiento University of Navarra") Prof Miguel A. Martínez-González, Adjunct Professor of Nutrition, and his coworkers tracked nearly 20,000 men and women (mean age 38) from December 1999 to February 2014, with repeated assessments every two years. During that time, 335 of the participants died; the most common cause of death was cancer. They found that, compared with participants whose diets contained the least amounts of ultraprocessed food (<2 servings/d), participants whose diets contained the highest amounts (>4 servings/d) had a 62 percent increased risk of premature death from any cause during the study period. This study also accounted for factors such as sex, age, physical activity, baseline BMI and smoking history and was published in the BMJ with Maira Bes-Rastrollo (former visiting scholar at our Department at HSPH, now Full Professor of Preventive Medicine in Spain) and Anais Rico-Campa (doctoral candidate) as leading authors.

The SUN cohort was designed at HSPH in 1998 under the supervision of Drs Alberto Ascherio, Walter Willett and Frank Hu. Some ultraprocessed foods (UPF) are typically ready-to-eat or can be popped into a microwave. They include frozen meals, canned foods, sugary cereals, reconstituted meats and packaged baked goods. They generally contain high levels of saturated fat, added sugars, salt and various additives. According to the NOVA classification UPF include petit suisse; custard; flan; pudding; ice cream; processed meat (chorizo, salami, mortadella, sausage, hamburger, morcilla); pate; foie-gras; spicy sausage/meatballs; potato chips; breakfast cereals; pizza, including pre-prepared pies; margarine; cookies; chocolate cookies; muffins; doughnuts; croissants or other non-handmade pastries; cakes; churros; chocolate and candies; nougat; marzipan; carbonated drinks; artificially sugared beverages; fruit drinks; milkshakes; instant soups and creams; croquettes; mayonnaise; and alcoholic drinks produced by fermentation followed by distillation such as whisky, gin, and rum.


US Navy Considers Keto Diet for SEALS

According to a June 14, 2019 Business Insider article, The U.S. military is now considering putting its elite Navy SEALS on the high-fat, ultra-low-carbohydrate keto diet. Their rationale is that it may help them stay underwater longer because the keto diet induces a metabolic change called ketosis. This causes the body to burn stored fat as energy rather than blood sugar. However, a side effect of the process is that it changes the way the body handles oxygen deprivation.

"Ketosis reduces the amount of carbon dioxide produced by the body in relation to the amount of oxygen it consumes,” said Dr David Ludwig, Professor in the Department of Nutrition. “The buildup of carbon dioxide in the bloodstream is what triggers the need to breathe, so being on the keto diet could enable someone to breathe less often.” Ludwig also cautioned, however, that the long-term health effects of the keto diet have not been studied.

Read the Business Insider article: Navy SEALs are looking into the keto diet to be even more effective on missions

Learn more
Is the keto diet safe? (Harvard Chan School news)

Diet review: Ketogenic diet for weight loss (Harvard Chan School’s The Nutrition Source)

New Study Finds Link Between Increased Red Meat Consumption and Higher Risk of Premature Death

According to a new study, those people who increased their daily servings of red meat over an eight-year period were more likely to die during the subsequent eight years compared to people who did not increase their red meat consumption. On the other hand, the study found that decreasing red meat and simultaneously increasing healthy alternative food choices over time was associated with lower mortality.

This is the first longitudinal study to examine how changes in red meat consumption over time may influence risk of early death. The researchers used health data from 53,553 women in The Nurses’ Health Study and 27,916 men in The Health Professionals Follow-up Study who were free of cardiovascular disease and cancer at baseline. Results indicate that increasing total processed meat intake by half a daily serving or more was associated with a 13% higher risk of mortality from all causes. Additionally, the same amount of unprocessed meat increased mortality risk by 9%. Significant associations between increased red meat consumption and increased deaths due to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and neurodegenerative disease were also found.

Concomitantly, study results showed that, overall, a decrease in red meat together with an increase in nuts, fish, poultry without skin, dairy, eggs, whole grains, or vegetables over eight years was associated with a lower risk of death in the subsequent eight years.

According to senior author Dr Frank Hu, Fredrick J. Stare Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology and chair, Department of Nutrition, “This long-term study provides further evidence that reducing red meat intake while eating other protein foods or more whole grains and vegetables may reduce risk of premature death. To improve both human health and environmental sustainability, it is important to adopt a Mediterranean-style or other diet that emphasizes healthy plant foods.”


Diabetics on Mediterranean Diet Found To Have Better Memory

A recent study suggests that people with diabetes may have better brain function if they follow a Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, fish and healthy fats. According to lead author Dr Josiemer Mattei, Assistant Professor of Nutrition, “Mediterranean diets have long been linked to better heart and brain health as well as a lower risk of developing diabetes. But research to date hasn’t offered a clear picture of whether any cognitive benefits of eating this way might differ for people with and without diabetes. A healthy Mediterranean diet includes foods that are rich in fruit and vegetables, which has antioxidants, and in fish and oils, which include healthy fats. These nutrients help sustain cognitive function by reducing inflammation and oxidation in the brain.”
Mattei further states that “These benefits may help people whether or not they have diabetes. When people do have diabetes, however, the abundance of whole grains and legumes in a typical Mediterranean diet may help keep blood sugar well controlled and improve cognitive function.” The researchers followed 913 participants in the Boston Puerto Rican Health Study over two years, assessing their eating habits, testing for type 2 diabetes, and administering a series of tests for cognitive function, memory, and executive function.

Findings indicate that among people without diabetes, more closely following a Mediterranean diet was associated with memory improvements during the study period, but not with changes in other types of cognitive function. For diabetics, however, the Mediterranean diet was associated with a wide range of improvements in brain health. People with diabetes who more closely followed a Mediterranean diet had bigger gains in cognitive function, word recognition, and clock drawing skills than their counterparts who didn’t eat this way.

The study had some limitations, however, including that it focused only on Puerto Rican people; thus, the results might not be applicable to individuals from other racial or ethnic groups or with different dietary traditions. Researchers also relied on study participants to accurately recall and report what they ate and drank—this is not always accurate.


See also: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-diabetes-diet-cognition/mediterranean-diet-tied-to-better-memory-for-diabetics-idUSKCN1T12ES

Diet Review: Mediterranean Diet (The Nutrition Source)

MONDAY NUTRITION SEMINARS

The Department of Nutrition holds its weekly Monday Nutrition Seminar Series every Monday throughout the academic year. The talks are varied, but they highlight the many different aspects of cutting-edge research that is currently being conducted in the fields of nutrition and global public health. These seminars are held from 1:00-1:20 pm in Kresge 502 at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The seminars are free and open to the public.

Our Monday Nutrition Seminar Series for this academic year has ended. Our regular Monday Seminar Series will resume in Fall 2019. However, the following Special Nutrition Seminar will be held in July:

July 9: Michelle Cardel, PhD, MS, RD, Assistant Professor and Director of the Obesity Research Alliance, University of Florida. “Poverty, Inequality, and Calorie Burden: How Both Social Reality and Perception Drive Eating Behaviors and Risk for Obesity.” Dr. Cardel will discuss psychosocial factors influencing eating behavior and risk for obesity. This special seminar will be held from 4:00-5:00 pm in Kresge G2.

For more information, contact: hfarmer@hsph.harvard.edu
Processed food and health
The spectrum of food processing ranges from basic technologies like freezing, to the more complex incorporation of additives: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/processed-foods/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/processed-foods/)

Tips for a healthy summer picnic
Whether you’re hosting a backyard cookout, or planning a picnic on the go, be sure to fuel your family with summertime meals that are both nutritious and safe: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2017/06/29/healthy-summer-picnic/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2017/06/29/healthy-summer-picnic/)

Recently updated: Diabetes
Learn about the different types of diabetes, including prediabetes, type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, latent autoimmune diabetes, and gestational diabetes: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/disease-prevention/diabetes-prevention/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/disease-prevention/diabetes-prevention/)

Spotlight on Vitamin B12
Vitamin B12 is needed to form red blood cells and DNA. It is also a key player in the function and development of brain and nerve cells: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/vitamin-b12/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/vitamin-b12/)

*If you would like to remain current as to what is happening in the field of nutrition, please be sure to view our Nutrition Source website for the latest updates!*  
(See: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/))

What is EVERGREEN: The EVidEnce-based Research GRoup to EvaluatE Nutrition policy?

EVERGREEN: The EVidEnce-based Research GRoup to EvaluatE Nutrition policy is a team of faculty, researchers, and students at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health that are committed to improving population health through research and evaluation of U.S. nutrition policies and programs. Led by Dr. Eric Rimm, in the Departments of Nutrition and Epidemiology, and Dr. Sara Bleich, in the Department of Health Policy and Management, this interdisciplinary research group investigates a wide variety of policy-relevant nutrition topics in the public and private sectors, such as the impact of financial incentives on the diets of SNAP participants, the effects of the Philadelphia beverage tax on prices and pass-through charges, the influence of food industry marketing programs such as Box Tops on consumer choice for families, and the impact of supermarket choice architecture, such as promotions and product placement, on food purchases, among many other projects.

Interested in our group?
- Check out our website: [https://sites.sph.harvard.edu/evergreen/](https://sites.sph.harvard.edu/evergreen/)
- Read our newsletter: [https://mailchi.mp/7c35d077c445/newest-updates-from-evergreen-520417](https://mailchi.mp/7c35d077c445/newest-updates-from-evergreen-520417)
Save-the-Date!

50th Anniversary of the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health

10/3/19 and 10/4/19

Use the link below to sign-up for the event’s mailing list and more information

https://sites.tufts.edu/foodnutritionandhealth2019/

Mark your calendar for a historic nutrition policy event hosted by The Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Activities will start the afternoon (4:00-6:30 pm) of 10/3/19 with a keynote speaker, panel discussion, and reception hosted by the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard Chan in the Kresge Café.

On Friday, 10/4/19 there will be a full day event with panel discussions and speakers at The Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.

More details will follow.
Save the date!

The Nutrition Department’s Picnic will be on September 14th, 2019 from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Larz Anderson Park in Brookline, at the BBQ Shelter (same venue as last year).
Research Associate

The Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health seeks a Research Associate to contribute to a team focused on developing an action-oriented evidence base and improving communication about the evidence to the public in order to inform policy and decision-making on childhood obesity prevention and nutrition promotion.

Duties and responsibilities:

The successful candidate will work collaboratively with Assistant Professor Erica Kenney, Senior Lecturer Lilian Cheung, and other team members on multiple empirical research projects as well as nutrition communication projects related to obesity prevention. Research topics will include evaluations of community-based intervention strategies to improve foods and beverages served in child care, secondary data analyses of recent policies affecting child health, mixed methods investigations of nutrition policy implementation in school and child care settings, mixed methods studies of exposure to marketing on digital devices, and longitudinal analyses of children’s dietary intake and health. In addition, the candidate will gain experience developing critical communications materials to improve translation of current obesity prevention science to a lay audience.

Specific roles for the Research Associate include:

- Managing datasets, performing data analysis, and interpreting findings
- Contributing to project design decisions and developing proposals for new research
- Coordinating day-to-day study operations, including overseeing data collection schedules
- Interacting with community partners and collaborators
- Developing and writing content for the Obesity Prevention Source, the third-most visited website at Harvard Chan
- Co-authoring scientific papers

Qualifications:

- Doctoral degree in public health, nutrition, social and behavioral sciences, epidemiology, health policy, health communications, or related field
- Demonstrated ability to conduct empirical research projects with a high degree of independence
- Skills and experience applying quantitative methods to large datasets, including strong proficiency in Stata, SAS, or R
- Outstanding interpersonal communication skills
- Strong scientific writing skills
- Demonstrated ability to translate scientific findings to a general public audience
- Excellent problem solving and organizational skills
- Comfort balancing the practical and intellectual demands of a diverse portfolio of projects

The ideal candidate has a track record of successful participation in collaborative research projects and topical expertise related to obesity. The candidate will be detail-oriented, flexible, collaborative, and accustomed to working independently.

To apply, interested candidates should visit: [https://academicpositions.harvard.edu/hr/postings/9106](https://academicpositions.harvard.edu/hr/postings/9106)
A Harvard MPH
In Nutrition

Acquire skills in nutrition practice, policy, and communication along with foundational knowledge in nutritional science, epidemiology, and public health.

This 65-credit program is 1.5 years (3 semesters) in length, beginning in September and ending in December of the following year. The summer session features a unique practicum experience allowing students to create a project with real-world application.

Earn a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree that explores the role nutrition plays in the health and well-being of the world's populations from a variety of vantage points, including environmental, socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors.

Core courses emphasize methodological strategies to develop, analyze, and evaluate interventions, programs, and policies typically used in public health nutrition. Students may also choose from a variety of electives tailored to personal career goals and interests such as nutrition policy, health disparities, nutrition epidemiology, global health, social and behavioral sciences, and environmental sustainability.

Who should apply?
The program is suitable for those both early or established in their careers, who wish to develop or further their expertise in nutrition. Prospective students will need to meet the following:

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.
- At least two years of post-baccalaureate work

For more information about application requirements or other program details, contact Stephanie Davis, Academic Coordinator.