NEWS FROM AROUND THE NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

Dr Josiemer Mattei Appointed as Donald and Sue Pritzker Associate Professor of Nutrition

Dr Josiemer Mattei has been promoted to Donald and Sue Pritzker Associate Professor of Nutrition. Dr. Mattei’s research focuses on diet and health disparities in minority and underserved populations. Specifically, she studies the dietary, genetic, and sociocultural factors that determine cardiometabolic health in Hispanic/Latino populations both in the United States and in their countries of origin. Much of this work has focused on Puerto Rico. Dr. Mattei’s recent work assesses the diet-related and psychosocial risk factors of cardiovascular disease in a cohort of 2,000 adults across Puerto Rico, evaluating urban-rural differences. She is also studying the impact of food and water shortage in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria on this cohort. Dr. Mattei has received a Mark Bieber Award for Outstanding Nutrition-related Research from the American Heart Association, of which she is a Fellow and a Harvard Catalyst Health Disparities Research Program Enrichment Award. She was recently named a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Leader.

Dr. Mattei received a BS in industrial microbiology from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus; an MPH in epidemiology and biostatistics from Tufts University; and a PhD in nutritional biochemistry and metabolism from Tufts University’s Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. She was a postdoctoral associate at the Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University and a Yerby Postdoctoral Fellow in nutritional and genetic epidemiology at the Harvard Chan School. She joined the faculty of the School as an assistant professor of nutrition in 2012. Her experience also includes a position as a visiting assistant professor at Northeastern University. Dr. Mattei has been a member of the School’s Committee for the Advancement of Women Faculty (CAWF) since 2013 and has served as co-chair since 2018.
NEW GRANTS

**Dr Christopher Duggan**, Professor in the Department of Nutrition, will be the PI of a new R21 titled "Assessing the relationship between environmental enteric dysfunction and poor growth via a newly developed 11-plex assay".

DISSERTATION DEFENSES

**Aviva Musicus**, Doctoral Candidate in Nutrition, will defend her dissertation titled “The Influence of Food Environments on Chronic Disease: Evidence for Policy Change”. Her defense will take place from 2:00-4:00 pm in Building 1, Room 1302, on March 30, 2020.

In Memory of Professor Marianne Wessling-Resnick

The Department of Nutrition and the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health mourn the passing of a beloved member of our faculty, Marianne Wessling-Resnick, Professor of Nutritional Biochemistry. Marianne passed away on November 13, 2019. She had been a valued member of our Department of Nutrition since 1990 and later a member of the Department of Molecular Metabolism (formerly Genetics and Complex Diseases) and she will be deeply missed.

Marianne was a valuable member of our faculty and a great colleague during her esteemed academic career. She was especially well-known as a dedicated and caring mentor to the faculty, staff, and students with whom she worked and was awarded the School’s Junior Faculty Mentoring Award in 2013 and the Committee for the Advancement of Women Faculty (CAWF) Mentoring Award earlier this year. In presenting her with this award, CAWF wrote, “Dr. Wessling-Resnick has had a major positive impact on the careers of many faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and students. She is a generous coach to those under her mentorship who have difficult decisions to make, and she is especially appreciated for the understanding and respect she shows for colleagues and mentees balancing their roles as caregivers and professionals.” Marianne was a pillar of the community at the Harvard Chan School for many years and will certainly be missed.

Marianne’s research interests included metal homeostasis and neurotoxicity, specifically genetic disorders of iron metabolism at the molecular level and their implications in complex disease. She was known throughout the nutritional biochemistry community for showing the role of iron status in the regulation of iron and manganese uptake by the intestinal, pulmonary, and olfactory pathways. She served as a member of CAWF, including as the chair, for many years. Marianne was also both a member and the chair of the Standing Committee on Appointments, Reappointments, and Promotions (SCARP) for several years and served multiple terms on the Faculty Council. She was a member of several committees and groups at the National Institutes of Health as well. Marianne was the instructor and developer for several highly rated courses in her time at the Harvard Chan School. Most recently, she taught NUT216: Research Techniques in Molecular Biology. Previous courses she taught include Biological Sciences in Public Health, Advanced Topics in Nutrition, Methods in Cell Biology, Science of Human Nutrition, and Membrane Trafficking.

Marianne received a BS in chemistry from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, an MS in biophysics and theoretical biology from the University of Chicago, and a PhD in biomedical sciences from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She held a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School before joining the Harvard Chan School in 1990 as Assistant Professor of Nutrition. She was promoted to Associate Professor of Nutrition in 1995 and to Professor of Nutritional Biochemistry in 2000, when she became the Department of Nutrition’s first tenured woman faculty member. Marianne had been a member of the PhD
Program in Biological Sciences in Public Health since 1994, serving as its director from 2010 to 2014. She was also previously the director of the Division of Biological Sciences and a member of the Program in Quantitative Genomics.

Room 102 of Building 2 was dedicated as the Professor Marianne Wessling-Resnick Conference Room. Her portrait is displayed in the room along with a plaque. A small dedication ceremony was held in her memory.

New Faces in the Department!

Andrea Romanos-Nanclares  
Visiting Graduate Student

Hi, Hola! I’m Andrea Romanos-Nanclares, MS, BS, a third-year PhD candidate in Nutritional Epidemiology, coming from Adjunct Professor Miguel A. Martinez-Gonzalez’s Department (University of Navarra, Spain). Since academia and research are key tenets of my future career prospects, I am involved in teaching and also in research aimed at understanding how diet may influence breast cancer risk in a prospective, ongoing Mediterranean Cohort Study, the SUN Project. I have also been serving as a researcher in a nutritional intervention study on how the Mediterranean Diet may prevent relapses among women with early breast cancer (LIFEBREAST trial).

Here at HSPH, I will examine the association between sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened beverages as well as plant-based dietary patterns with the onset of breast cancer in the Nurses’ Health Study (NHS) and NHSII under the supervision of Dr Heather Eliassen, director of the NHSII.

In my spare time, I love travelling, spending time with my family, taking long walks, cooking Spanish recipes, drinking good coffee, listening to classical music, playing the piano and dancing. Please be sure to check out my recipe for Spanish salmorejo in this same issue.

I’m thrilled to be able to spend the next six months here with you!

Maria Soledad Hershey  
Visiting Graduate Student

I began my research stay at HSPH on January 2nd with Dr Stefanos Kales in the Department of Environmental Health. Since I came on behalf of Adjunct Professor Miguel A. Martinez-Gonzalez’s Department at the University of Navarra, Spain, I will also be interfacing with the Department of Nutrition while I am here.

Originally from New York, I pursued my undergraduate studies and Master’s in human nutrition and dietetics in Spain, at the University of Navarra in Pamplona. Currently a 2nd year doctoral student, my research at HSPH will involve applying the Mediterranean lifestyle (MEDLIFE) index in "Feeding America’s Bravest", a Mediterranean diet-based intervention to change firefighters’ eating habits and improve cardiovascular risk profiles.
Jinbo Hu  
Visiting Scholar

Jinbo Hu is a Physician (Consultant) from the first Affiliated Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, Chongqing, China. He received his MD and PhD from Chongqing Medical University, Chongqing, China, and his primary research interests are diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. While here as a Visiting Scholar under the mentorship of Dr Qi Sun, Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition, Jinbo will be performing statistical analyses, presenting results, and drafting and publishing manuscripts at scientific journals.

Jinbo loves to play basketball, so if anyone is interested in getting together for a good game with him, let him know. He also loves to go fishing on weekends and would love some company!

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.

The following speakers will present their work in March:

Mar 2:  Dr Ganmaa Davaasambuu, Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition – "Trials of Vitamin D Supplementation in Mongolia: Past, Current and Future" – NGHP.

Mar 9:  Dr Alia Crum, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Stanford University – “Edgy Veggies: Mindsets and Motivating Healthy Behaviors”.

Mar 16:  SPRING BREAK—NO MONDAY NUTRITION SEMINAR

Mar 23:  Dr Carlos Camargo, Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Harvard TH Chan School, Professor of Medicine, HMS – TBD.

Mar 30:  Dr Rebecca L. Pearl, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Director of Research, Center for Weight and Eating Disorders, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania – TBD.

For more information, contact: hfarmer@hsph.harvard.edu
Professor Frank Hu is Featured in a Cover Story of Harvard Magazine

(Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet: Confronting the triple threats of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change).

Dr Frank Hu was being interviewed for the latest issue of Harvard Magazine while he helped himself to a wide variety of mostly plant-based foods at the salad bar of the Kresge Cafeteria of Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health. Like the previous department chair, Dr Walter Willett, Hu works with cafeteria staff to keep all of its offerings healthy. Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate is posted throughout the cafeteria to guide customers in selecting a healthy meal there.

Hu, the third chair in the HSPH Nutrition Department’s 78-year history, is a nutritional epidemiologist, who studies the relationship between diet and health. His research encompasses a number of different areas, primarily using data from BWH- and HSPH-based large cohorts. For example, his studies have demonstrated important relationships between consumption of red meat, nuts, sugary beverages, and various dietary patterns and risk of chronic diseases as well as potential importance of metabolomics—the study of the chemical byproducts specific cellular processes leave behind—which may allow for better diet measurements and earlier disease-risk identification in nutritional research.

His main concern right now is what he sees as the intersection of three threats: obesity, undernutrition, and climate change. Of the seven and a half billion people in the world, about two billion are overweight, and two billion more are undernourished. According to Hu, "Both overnutrition and undernutrition are affected by climate change. When the temperature rises—when carbon dioxide increases—that can actually reduce the amount of zinc, iron, protein, and other nutrients in crops like rice or wheat…and that can further exacerbate the problem of undernutrition in the poor regions of the world. In the meantime, our food system undermines human health because the Westernization of diet has led to high consumption of red meat, processed meats, sugars, and saturated fats. That has led to a global epidemic
of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.” He further suggests that animal agriculture, the second-largest contributor of human-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, worsens the problem.

“Without [considering] the health of the population, or the health of the community, it’s not really meaningful to talk about personal health,” he says. “In the same vein, without [considering] the health of our planet, I think it’s really futile to talk about the health of the human population. They are all interrelated and intertwined, and they have to be considered and looked at simultaneously rather than separately.” He believes a healthy, plant-based diet could be the answer.

To read full interview in Harvard Magazine: https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2020/03/feature-healthy-plate-planet

Harvard-Sponsored Summit Looks at Production, Health Sustainability, and Social Justice

Dr Walter Willett, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, spoke at a recent Harvard-sponsored conference called “Food, Farms, Fisheries, and Forests,” a daylong event at the University of Massachusetts Club. The conference was designed to bring together experts on not only nutrition and the environment, but also people focused on social justice and its implications for feeding the population. Willett opened the discussion by outlining the dangers posed by a business-as-usual approach and said the global community faces the challenge of feeding a population expected to hit 9.8 billion by 2050.

According to Willett, “The standard response is to increase food production. Obviously and conspicuously, obesity is increasing in both adults and children.” He notes that the results in following this approach include more obesity-related cancers and heart disease. So simply producing more food may not be the answer, as strong evidence exists that our current diet is killing us. Also, food production is a major contributor to global warming which is accelerating. Resources such as water, are now threatened. Willett further states that this has led to a challenge “to apply a global-food-systems framework to see if optimal diets could fit within planetary boundaries.”

Willett proposes a plan that recommends one serving of dairy a day, a modest amount of poultry and eggs, and, at most, one serving of red meat a week, with legumes, nuts, and whole grains making up the rest. “There’s some flexibility around this,” he said. “Different cultures will want different mixes.”

Other speakers at the summit discussed such topics as the historical and racial roots of food inequality, from “food deserts” to unsustainable and unjust policies of land theft by early settlers. They also discussed how initiatives are helping underserved communities reclaim agency in terms of health and nutrition, as well as stewardship of the land.

To read more: https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/02/food-summit-examines-sustainability-health-and-justice/

Visit the Harvard Chan School website for the latest news, press releases, and multimedia offerings.
Dr Aurelijus Veryga (middle), Lithuania Minister of Health, and Tomas Vaiciunas (right), Director of the Lifestyle Medicine Masters Curriculum at Kaunas University SPH were hosted by Dr Walter Willett (left) during their visit to the Harvard TH Chan School on February 24, 2020. Both men spoke from different perspectives on public health as a health policy priority in Lithuania at the department’s Monday Nutrition Seminar.

NUTRITION SOURCE UPDATES

Spotlight on Heart Disease
In recognition of “heart month,” learn about heart disease, and steps you can take to help prevent it. [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/disease-prevention/cardiovascular-disease/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/disease-prevention/cardiovascular-disease/)

Nuts for the Heart
A look at the research behind nuts and heart health: [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nuts-for-the-heart/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nuts-for-the-heart/)

*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/))

Nutrition Department Held A Successful Retreat
The Department of Nutrition held its annual retreats for faculty and research scientists, and students and postdocs, on February 12, 2020 in the Pechet Room at the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center. The retreat was held in two parts: From 8:30 am to 12:30 pm faculty and research scientists convened to participate in discussions designed to lay the foundation for a future strategic plan for the department. A lunch followed until 1:30, when students and postdocs met for their own separate retreat, in which they were first debriefed on the morning session and attended a panel discussion on careers. A reception was held at 5:00.

Faculty and research scientists considered five areas of research within the department and participated in an activity called World Café. Everyone broke into small groups which rotated to different stations where participants discussed five subject areas. Each station had its own leader. The five stations were: Cohort Studies/Nutritional Epidemiology, Global Health & Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition, Nutrition & Basic Science Research, and Nutrition & Planetary Health. The questions that were considered for each topic/research area by the faculty and research scientists were: 1) What directions will the field go in over the next five years? 2) Are there opportunities to collaborate within the department, school, and beyond? 3) What are funding opportunities that can be identified from both federal and non-federal sources? 4) What are recruitment priorities? and 5) How can new technologies and novel methodologies be incorporated into your research area? A report summarizing these discussions will be soon available.

The planning committee for this year’s retreat included Drs Jorge Chavarro, Jeremy Furtado, Frank Hu, Erica Kenney, and Walter Willett, and Stef Dean and Katrina Soriano. Gillian Simkiss of Sycamore Keys Consulting facilitated the faculty and research scientist retreat.

Dr Christopher Duggan’s International Nutrition Course Focuses on Isotopic Techniques for the First Time

Scientists, nutrition and health professionals from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda gathered at the St. John’s Research Institute (SJRI) in Bangalore, India, from January 13-24, 2020 for the 11th edition of the Bangalore Boston Nutrition Collaborative (BBNC). For the first time since its inception, BBNC held designated sessions on the use of stable isotope techniques in nutrition, benefitting students, associate professors, research officers and data analysts.

The use of stable isotope techniques for the assessment of body composition, exclusive breastfeeding, total vitamin A body pools, iron absorption, energy expenditure, environmental enteric dysfunction and in
cancer were highlighted. According to course co-director Christopher Duggan, a Professor at the Departments of Nutrition and Global Health and Population at HSPH, “The inclusion of stable isotope technology instructions – both lectures and hands on experience – in this year’s course has allowed attendees to apply these methods to the many nutritional problems they are tackling at their home institutions. In countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, these approaches are critical to address acute and chronic nutritional diseases.”

The courses at BBNC are designed to explore the role of nutritional factors and health outcomes and to provide substantive knowledge in topic areas related to public health nutrition research. The courses aim to enhance methodological skills in areas of nutritional, infectious and chronic diseases epidemiology and integrate research findings to inform public health recommendations as well as program design and implementation.

*From:* [https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/international-nutrition-course-focuses-on-isotopic-techniques-for-the-first-time](https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/international-nutrition-course-focuses-on-isotopic-techniques-for-the-first-time)

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**CELEBRATE THE NUTRITION STARS**

- **30 Years**
  - Eric Rimm

- **20 years**
  - Kana Wu

- **15 years**
  - Robert Sheahan

- **10 years**
  - Katrina Soriano
  - Elizaveta Gazeeva
  - Allison Gordon

- **5 years**
  - Kerry Ivey
  - Matthew Lopes
  - Gloreimy Nova

The event will take place on

**Wednesday, March 4, 2020, 2:30 PM**

Kresge Cafeteria

A reception will follow.
In 2019, meat—of all types—seemed to dominate much of the news coverage on food and health. Controversial guidelines around red and processed meats made headlines, while countless publications examined the new wave of plant-based meat alternatives being marketed as a way to accelerate the shift from industrial animal agriculture. Designed to closely recreate the taste and experience of eating meat, products from brands like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat drew interest from a broader consumer base than earlier alternatives targeted at a vegan or vegetarian demographic.

But can these innovations engineered from plants really be part of a healthy and sustainable diet? And what about the developing area of lab-cultured meats seeking to grow familiar products from cells, rather than produce them from the animal itself?

These were just some of the overarching questions informing our department’s January symposium, which explored both red meat and meat alternatives in context of broader challenges for conducting, implementing, and communicating public health research, policy, and guidelines.

If you missed the event, not to worry! A recording of the symposium will soon be available at: hsp.h/al Jan27
RECIPE CORNER
(By Andrea Romanos-Nanclares, Visiting Graduate Student)

- **Recipe type:** Cold Soup
- **Cuisine:** Spanish, Mediterranean-type
- **Time:** <30 minutes
- **Serves:** 4

**Ingredients**
- 6-8 Tomatoes (the quality of the tomatoes is one of the most important factors in the taste)
- 1 Medium Baguette
- 1 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)
- 1 Clove of Garlic
- Generous drizzle of sherry vinegar
- A Grain of Salt
- 2 Hard Boiled Eggs
- Sliced Serrano Ham (cured Spanish jamón ibérico)

**Instructions**
*Important note...It's only three main ingredients; the better your tomatoes, bread and extra virgin olive oil, the better your "salmorejo", so choose wisely.*

1. Peel the tomatoes and cut into pieces and integrate them in a blender with the bread (cut into pieces with crust removed), and garlic.
2. Blend until homogenous, then add the sherry vinegar, salt to taste, and EVOO.
3. Blend again until delightfully creamy and refrigerate for 2 hours.
4. Serve in small bowls with chopped hard boiled egg and sliced ham as condiments and drizzle with EVOO. **Serve cold and enjoy!**
The Art & Science of Mindfulness:
Exploring the Research and Application of Mindfulness Practice for Wellness

Monday, March 9, 2020 | 3:00 - 5:00 PM | Reception to follow

Panelists:

- C. Norman Coleman, MD
  Senior Medical Advisor, International Cancer Expert Corps, Inc.

- Alla Crum, PhD
  Adjunct Professor of Health Science, Department of Psychology, Stanford University

- Andrew Huberman, PhD
  Assistant Professor of Psychology, Neurology, and Ophthalmology, Stanford University School of Medicine

- Sara Lazar, PhD
  Associate Professor of Psychology, Psychiatry, and Radiology, Massachusetts General Hospital
  Assistant Professor of Psychology, Harvard Medical School

- Eric Loucks, PhD
  Assistant Professor of Epidemiology, Behavioral and Social Sciences, and Medicine, Harvard School of Public Health
  Professor of Health and Warren Alpert Medical School, Brown University

- Thây Pháp Ân, PhD
  Taoist monk, teacher, and founder of the Blue Dragon Foundation

Welcome and Introductions:

- Michelle A. Williams, ScD
  Dean of the Faculty, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

- Lillian Cheung, DSc
  Lecturer and Director of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
  Editorial Director, The Nutrition Source

- Walter Willett, MD, DrPH
  Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

For the full program & more information: hsph.me/mindfulness-2020 Register to attend by March 2