NEWS FROM AROUND THE NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

AWARDS

Dr Christopher Duggan, MD, MPH, Professor in the Department of Nutrition, delivered the 44th Gopalan Memorial Oration of the Nutrition Society of India on July 12, 2021. The title of his talk was "Race, Caste and Nutrition in the 21st Century: Select Studies in Maternal and Child Health."

Stef Dean, Academic and Educational Project Coordinator, has been nominated for the 2021 Summer ACE Award. The ACE Award acknowledges Harvard Chan School staff (individual or a team of 3-5) who have made extraordinary efforts in our workplace. In addition to their regular responsibilities, they have accomplished something special or exemplified an extraordinary commitment to the School’s mission. The ACE Award is also an opportunity to acknowledge managers who lead by example, effectively develop and recognize staff and foster a collaborative environment.

Clemens Wittenbecher, Research Associate, and Danielle Haslam, Research Fellow, both received the Boston Nutrition Obesity Research Center Pilot & Feasibility Award for their projects titled: "Multi-omic signatures of sugar and artificially-sweetened beverages and changes in body weight" and "Metabolomics profiles' 10-year changes linking diet, obesity and genetics to subsequent T2D risk”, respectively. (See https://www.bumc.bu.edu/bnorc/pilot-and-feasibility-program/currently-funded-investigators/)

PUBLICATIONS

Dr Christopher Golden, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Planetary Health, and his team just published a new paper. The basic idea of their paper is to theorize how food systems lead to functional or dysfunctional nutritional outcomes. There are two parallel trajectories unfolding around the world: one of ecological degradation and the other of market integration and globalization. These interacting forces can
"trap" individuals to follow a trajectory to undernutrition, overnutrition, or proper nutrition. It underlines the critical role of functioning ecosystems and a healthy planet for human health, using coral reef food systems as an archetypal example.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211912421000705?fbclid=IwAR195Klqk-eGp4KrQ1Q3htdPuW5YE5jieSgXGZy-Ja1ndZlp2gTz8O=Ukk

Dr Danielle Haslam has recently published the following paper:


GRANTS AND FUNDING

MARIANNA CORTESE, M.D., Ph.D., Research Scientist, and her team recently received a 2-year grant from the Michael J. Fox Foundation entitled “Volatile Biomarkers of Prodromal Parkinson’s Disease from Sebum” for which they will collect sebum samples from a subpopulation of participants in the NHS and HPFS cohorts. The study aims at characterising the sebum volatiles and metabolites in prodromal PD to assess potential non-invasive biomarkers for the early detection of PD. Cortese is the PI of this grant.

Kjetil L. Bjornevik, MD, PhD, Research Scientist, has also received a two-year research grant from the Michael J. Fox Foundation entitled: “DNA methylation-based biomarkers for Parkinson’s disease”. This project will evaluate whether DNA methylation predicted age (epigenetic age) can contribute to early detection and prediction of progression during the prodromal phase of Parkinson’s disease. Bjornevik is PI of this grant and Dr Alberto Ascherio is a co-investigator of the project.

OTHER RECOGNITION

Brett Otis, Communication and Project Manager in the Department of Nutrition, was featured the Harvard Chan School Human Resources website as an SPH Success Story. To read more about Brett and his career trajectory: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/human-resources/resources-current-staff/#successstories

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The 7th Annual PREDIMED Omics Symposium took place virtually on July 2nd. Co-chaired by Drs Frank Hu, Miguel Martinez-Gonzalez, and Rosa Lamuela-Raventos, the symposium featured speakers and presentations from across the globe and focused on new advances, applications, and translations in the fields of nutrition and epidemiology. A complete list of speakers, presentations, as well as the event recording can be found here: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition/omics-2021/
Laura (Sampson) Kent Reaches 30-Year Milestone in Department of Nutrition

Laura Kent, Senior Research Dietetic Coordinator, has reached her 30-year milestone in our Department of Nutrition this past June, and has remained a key ingredient in its success throughout this time.

Laura has been an invaluable resource to our department’s cohort studies. She manages a very busy staff of several dietitians, plus several other employees. Over her years at Harvard, though, she has worked with over a hundred dietitians, interns, research staff, doctoral students, and faculty members. Laura is responsible for ensuring overall quality control of the nutrient database, analyzing new variables uncovered by investigators in their research, and tracking changes over time in the different foods along with their respective histories. She also works together with our internal investigators and students, and over 100 investigators from outside institutions. In addition, Laura also helps in the grant writing and budget processes for our various cohorts, and has analyzed the different components of the Men’s and Women’s Lifestyle Validation Studies.

Dr Walter Willett, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, adds that “While we recognize with great appreciation Laura’s 30-year anniversary as a member of our school’s community, Laura actually started as a member of our research team 10 years earlier when she was officially an employee of the Channing Laboratory. Thus, this is really a recognition of her 40 years overseeing the dietary component of our cohort research. She and her team have created a unique time-specific food composition database that underpins all of our research on diet and health, and has done this with the highest attention to data quality. We are all grateful for her sustained efforts.”

Dr Eric Rimm, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition further notes, “Laura has great attention to detail and leaves no stone unturned when gathering data for our food composition database. Despite how seriously she takes her job, she is an absolute joy to work with as an individual and as a professional. I know the dozens of people that have worked for Laura heap praise on her for her passion for her work and her compassion for each of them as an individual. Please count me as one of those people. I know my career would not have been as successful without Laura’s devotion to her job.

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 **1:00-1:50 pm** and are free and open to the public. Because of COVID-19, the seminars have been presented via Zoom since March of this past spring, and this zoom format may or may not continue in the fall of 2020. A zoom link for viewing will be available one week prior to each seminar.

*We will kick off our Fall Monday Nutrition/Global Health Seminar Series on August 30, 2021.*

**August 30  Dr Zulfiqar A. Bhutta**, Robert Harding Inaugural Chair in Global Child Health, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto – “How Stunting Improves? An Evaluation through the Exemplars Lens” – NGHP

**NEW FACES IN THE DEPARTMENT**

**Dr Makiko Mitsunami**  
*Postdoctoral Research Fellow*

Dr Makiko Mitsunami is a postdoctoral research fellow working with Dr Jorge E. Chavarro to investigate the impact of environmental factors such as diet on women’s and men’s health, especially in relation to fertility outcomes. She graduated from Jichi Medical University in Japan in 2008, then specialized in obstetrics and gynecology. She did further training in reproductive medicine in Tokyo from 2015 to 2017. In 2021, she graduated the MMSCI course at HMS to improve her research skills and knowledge.

She loves trying out new recipes in her free time as well as spending time outdoors.

**Lydia Rankin**  
*Research Assistant*

My name is Lydia Rankin. I grew up in Andover, Massachusetts and attended the University of New Hampshire. I graduated in May with a Medical Microbiology: Biomedical Science degree. I am very excited to apply and further enhance the knowledge I gained during my undergraduate lab experiences. In the Nutrition Department, I am a research assistant in a lab managed by Christine Everett.

Outside of work I enjoy spending time outside, going on runs, skiing, cooking healthy meals, and reading. During the summer, I spend a lot of time with my extended family (and two golden retrievers) at my lake house in Maine.
SSBs May Raise Risk of Early Colorectal Cancer

According to a new study led by Dr Jinhee Hur, Research Fellow, drinking sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) may raise the risk of early-onset colorectal cancer. Data from 96,000 participants in the Nurses’ Health Study II was examined. Findings indicate that women who consumed more than two SSBs a day had more than double the risk of developing early-onset colorectal cancer when compared with women who drank less than one sugary drink a week.

Further, each 8-ounce sugary drink consumed per day was linked to a 16% higher risk of early-onset colorectal cancer. The researchers also found that the effects were particularly striking among teenagers who drank sugary beverages. For example, each daily serving consumed by participants between ages 13 and 18 was associated with a 32% higher risk of early onset of the disease.

Hur suggested swapping sugary drinks for water, milk, or unsweetened coffee or tea. She also noted that eating less red and processed meat and minimizing alcohol consumption may help mitigate the risk of colorectal cancer.

Read the Prevention article: https://www.prevention.com/health/health-conditions/a37055697/sugary-drinks-colorectal-cancer-risk/


Eating foods high in flavonoids may slow down cognitive decline

A new study has found that eating a plate full of colorful foods like strawberries and peppers, which include flavonoids, could slow your cognitive decline. People who ate about 600 milligrams (0.02 ounces)
of flavonoids per day had a 20% lower risk of cognitive decline than those who ate only 150 milligrams (0.005 ounces) per day.

**Dr Walter Willett**, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, explains that flavonoids are a series of compounds with strong antioxidant abilities that are commonly found in many fruits and vegetables. Damage to the "blood supply to the brain is an important contributor to cognitive decline". Willett adds that the anti-inflammatory properties of flavonoids help protect that blood supply, which in turn slows down the cognitive decline. Damage to the "blood supply to the brain is an important contributor to cognitive decline," said Willett, adding that the anti-inflammatory properties of flavonoids help protect that blood supply, which in turn slows down the cognitive decline. This is important because cognitive decline can lead to diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's.

The study spanned nearly a quarter of a century and had about 75,000 participants in the Nurses’ Health Study. The average age of the participants at the start of the study was 50, and they are now in their 70s and 80s, Willett said. He notes that people’s brain functions begin to decline in our 20s and 30s, but we usually don't notice it until we reach our 70s, he said. Eating foods high in flavonoids could make the downward slope less steep.

Willett also said there isn't a specific number of flavonoids people should eat each day, and they shouldn't be counted or measured. Additionally, eating flavonoids only plays a small role in potentially slowing down cognitive decline. People should live a healthy lifestyle as well, which includes regular physical activity and not smoking. Some fruits high in flavonoids include strawberries, blueberries and oranges. Peppers and celery are some vegetables with high amounts of the compound.

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**NUTRITION SOURCE UPDATES**

**Spotlight on walking**
Walking is one of the most popular forms of exercise worldwide. It doesn’t require expensive equipment or special skills, and it provides a wide range of health benefits. Whether you choose a solitary path in nature, city sidewalk, or treadmill, walking is a relatively accessible way to stay active.

[https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/walking/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/walking/)

**Interactive course on healthy, sustainable eating**
This free 10-minute learning experience, available in editions for health-science professionals and for the public, dynamically guides learners toward food choices that benefit both body and planet.

[https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition/continuing-nutrition-education/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition/continuing-nutrition-education/)

*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/))
SAVE THE DATE!

We are pleased to announce that the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health will hold its 16th Annual Stare-Hegsted Lecture on Monday, November 8, 2021, from 1:00-2:15 pm.*

Dr. Shiriki K. Kumanyika, PhD, MS, MPH, Research Professor, Community Health and Prevention, Drexel University, will be this year’s speaker. She is Founder and Chair of the Council on Black Health (formerly the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN)). CBH is a national network that seeks to have a significant impact on health in Black communities through collaboration, discovery, and innovation. In addition to her Drexel affiliation, Dr. Kumanyika retains an appointment as an Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). She was the founding director of Penn's Master of Public Health program.

Dr. Kumanyika's research has focused on identifying effective strategies to reduce nutrition-related chronic disease risks, with a particular emphasis on achieving health equity for black Americans. Over more than three decades, she led or collaborated on single- or multi-center randomized clinical trials or observational studies related to obesity, sodium intake, and other aspects of diet and lifestyle. Several of these studies evaluated interventions to promote healthy eating and physical activity in black children or adults in clinical or community-based settings. Her recent research with Council on Black Health colleagues has included studies of the targeted marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to black children and adults and food price influences on food purchases of black household food shoppers.

Dr. Kumanyika was Vice-Chair of the HHS Secretary's Advisory Committee on Healthy People 2020 objectives and is also involved in efforts to develop Healthy People 2030. She is a past president of the American Public Health Association and a member of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM, formerly known as the Institute of Medicine (IOM)). Dr. Kumanyika has extensive experience in advisory roles related to public health and nutrition policy in the US and abroad. She is currently chair of the NAM Food and Nutrition Board, a member of the CDC Task force on Community Preventive Services, Co-chair of the Policy and Prevention Section of the World Obesity Federation, a member of the Lancet Commission on Obesity, and a nutrition policy advisor to the World Health Organization and the World Cancer Research Fund.

*This will be a Zoom presentation. Should current Covid restrictions be lifted by that time, Dr Kumanyika will deliver her lecture in person, time and venue TBD.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!
Assistant or Associate Professor of Nutritional Clinical Trials

and/or Nutritional Metabolism

The Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health invites applications from candidates for a tenure-track position as assistant or associate professor with a focus on nutritional clinical trials. Candidates are also invited who have expertise and interest in nutritional metabolism and biochemistry in humans, or who have training in human genetics and coronary heart disease. This position will hold a primary appointment in the Department of Nutrition with a secondary appointment in the Department of Molecular Metabolism at the Harvard Chan School. This position may also have affiliation with the newly established Harvard Chan Research Center on Causes and Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease (CAP-CVD).

The successful candidate will have the opportunity to develop an independent and collaborative research program to study the effects of foods, nutrients and dietary patterns on biomarkers, disease risk factors, omics outcomes, and other mechanisms by which foods and nutrients affect chronic disease. The candidate’s focus may include atherosclerosis, dyslipidemia, hypertension, diabetes, or other conditions related to nutrition and metabolism. Expertise in clinical trials of dietary interventions that include disease-related outcomes, especially when linked to fundamental mechanisms, is desirable.

The Nutrition Department has facilities and staff to conduct clinical trials, including effectiveness, efficacy, and mechanistic studies, utilizing dietary supplementation, controlled feeding, and other research designs. The Department’s faculty have partnered for many years with the Center for Clinical Investigation at Brigham and Women’s Hospital to conduct nutritional studies that require ambulatory or inpatient admissions, and mechanistic studies such as stable isotope tracer studies and euglycemic hyperinsulinemic clamp.

The candidate will be encouraged to utilize a new facility in proteomics, lipidomics and metabolomics under the direction of the Molecular Metabolism Department, to study biomarkers and mechanisms of human disease.

Longitudinal well-established cohorts managed by the Nutrition Department and Brigham and Women’s Hospital such as the Nurses Health Study and Health Professionals Follow-Up Study are key resources for the faculty to apply basic and mechanistic science to populations. These cohorts have extensive genomic and epidemiological data resources, including nutritional, lifestyle, anthropometric, and social factors, and incidence data on a broad range of complex diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

The Department of Nutrition is committed to expanding multi-disciplinary studies of complex diseases and pressing public health problems using the latest methods and technologies. We are also committed to training students in the skills needed to conduct cutting-edge research in our increasingly interdisciplinary and changing fields. The successful candidate will be expected to participate actively in teaching and in the direction of training programs.

Candidates should hold a doctoral degree and are engaged in or have completed postdoctoral training with a focus on clinical trials in human nutrition. Linkage to biological mechanisms is desirable. Publication record can be in clinical nutritional trials; metabolism; and/or a closely related field. The successful candidate will have a record of outstanding productivity in an area that complements the existing research and training goals of the department. The candidate should possess the ability to work collaboratively with other scientists and the

scholarly qualities required to mentor doctoral students in the PhD Programs in Population Health Sciences and Biological Sciences in Public Health within Harvard’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health seeks to recruit, develop, promote, and retain the world’s best scholars. We are committed to upholding the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our hiring and promotion processes. Harvard is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. Applications from women and minority candidates are strongly encouraged. We are an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Information on resources for career development and work/life balance at HSPH can be found at: http://hsp.harvard.edu/resources-career-development-and-work-life-balance.

Applicants can access more information regarding the position and apply using the link below:

https://academicpositions.harvard.edu/postings/10260

For questions or support with submitting your application, please contact:

Katrina Sonino, Executive Director in the Department of Nutrition and the Department of Molecular Metabolism, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, kwright@hsph.harvard.edu
On August 10-12 from 10 am to 1 pm ET each day, the Food Forum will host a series of three virtual workshops that will explore potential challenges and opportunities in the application of precision and personalized nutrition approaches to optimize dietary guidance and improve nutritional status. Workshop presenters will discuss ways to define precision and personalized nutrition, describe current research design and methodologies, and limitations in design and data. Invited speakers will also delve into innovative methodologies and technologies at the various scales of precision nutrition (including genetic, physiological, individual, and social-ecological) and examine the challenges of adapting technologies for utilization. Finally, speakers will look at policy and regulatory challenges, providing their perspectives from academia, federal government, and industry.
For more information about the workshop, including the agenda, please visit the event page.

Register Here

Help Spread the Word!

Tweet Share on Twitter: On 8/10-8/12, @NASEM_Health is hosting a virtual workshop on challenges and opportunities for precision nutrition. Register now: https://bit.ly/3ex1Y8n #NASEMfoodforum