

The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

Newsflash

Spring 2020 Issue

The PRC has prepared this electronic **Newsflash** to keep you informed about our work and invite you to take part in our research, education and outreach activities. If you have ideas for working together on shared projects, please let us know.

For more information about the Yale-Griffin PRC:

Please visit our website at <https://yalegriffinprc.griffinhealth.org>

PRC Updates

Welcome: Our new PRC Core Research Project team members will play various roles in planning, implementing, and evaluating our virtual Diabetes Prevention Program intervention.

Meredith Campbell Britton, LMSW, Research Associate, is organizing our Year 1 focus groups with local residents and interviews with stakeholders.

Katherine LaMonaca, MPH, Research Associate, is managing the activities at YSPH and currently involved in the selection of assessment instruments and the development of a training manual for community health workers/nurses.

Amber Hromi-Felder, PhD, MPH, Associate Research Scientist, is managing a systemic review of the literature regarding the utilization of telehealth combined with community health workers in the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes.

Doug Kears, Community Research Fellow, is part of the instrument development team engaged in reviewing, piloting, and revising surveys and guides and will be conducting focus groups.

Claudette Kidd, Community Research Fellow, is part of the instrument development team engaged in reviewing, piloting, and revising surveys and guides and will be conducting focus groups.

Karen Spargo, MA, MPH, RS, retired Health Director of the Naugatuck Valley Health Department, will continue her work with the PRC as our National Community Committee Representative.

Mary Swansiger, BSN, MPH, CDCES, is one of Griffin's certified diabetes educators and will be contributing her expertise to our work.

Jackson Higginbottom, MPH, is working on PRC communications, focus groups, evaluation projects for Wholesome Wave, and leading COVID-19 activities.

Francesca Maviglia, MPH, is assisting with development of assessment instruments, focus groups, the training manual, and leading COVID-19 activities.

COVID-19 News and Resources

[Yale School of Public Health \(YSPH\) Response](#)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) faculty, staff and students are mobilizing to provide assistance and information to the Yale and New Haven communities. Here are some examples of their efforts (SOURCE: <https://publichealth.yale.edu/news-article/23479/>):

COVID Newsletter – COVID-19 Updated Data and Developments is published on the YSPH [website](#) every few days, and covers response efforts and updates in CT and RI.

Contact Tracing – YSPH students, staff and faculty have volunteered to help track and mitigate the virus' spread in New Haven. Using guidance from the CDC, they contact people who may have been exposed to the virus to share information about self-isolating and self-monitoring for symptoms. YSPH Dean Sten Vermund helped to coordinate the YSPH response in conjunction with the school's [Connecticut Emerging Infections Program](#) (EIP).

Telephone Bank – YSPH students, faculty and staff with training in epidemiology and community outreach have volunteered this telephone bank (established by Yale Health) to help answer calls concerning COVID-19 symptoms, disease monitoring, testing, and prevention measures.

Shopping for Seniors – To reduce the risk for exposure to infection among older adults who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, YSPH students have teamed up with the Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Connecticut to deliver groceries and other goods to their homes.

Advocacy and Information – On March 19, the YSPH released a [90-minute virtual 'town hall'](#) video with experts from Yale and New Haven to provide science-based information on COVID-19 and to respond to questions sent in by community members. See the YSPH website for regularly updated information at <https://publichealth.yale.edu/coronavirus>

United Way – The YSPH and the Yale School of Medicine's Center for Research and Engagement have partnered with United Way of Greater New Haven (UWGNH) to develop a volunteer portal to address urgent needs (e.g., for supplies) and provide up-to-date information on community resources. YSPH faculty, staff and students also have helped create guidelines for safe volunteering practices and have provided UWGNH with updated COVID-19 content for its portal.

Food Security – As part of an inter-agency effort, the Coordinated Food Assistance Network (CFAN) is organizing the delivery of pantry items directly to the homes of those in need and to those who cannot or should not be leaving their home at this time. This includes residents of New Haven, East Haven, West Haven, and Hamden. To sign up or to get more information, please visit this [website](#) or call all the Pantry to Pantry (P2P) hotline number at (888) 910-2960. CFAN is also organizing Neighborhood Pop-up Pantries in New Haven neighborhoods in partnership with local pantries. CFAN welcomes volunteers for a variety of different roles, including enrolling participants, packing foods, or delivering foods. Please sign up [here](#) or send an email message with any questions or concerns to delivery@cfannewhaven.org.



For the most up-to-date listing of open food pantries and soup kitchens in New Haven, please visit this [website](#). For more information on how best to assist in CFAN's efforts, contact Dr. Kathleen O'Connor-Duffany (email kathleen.oconnorduffany@yale.edu) or Alycia Santilli (email santillia1@southernct.edu).

Griffin Hospital and Lower Naugatuck Valley Agency Responses

Operations and Facilities – The hospital has renovated the Emergency Room to increase the capacity of negative pressure isolation rooms, and the Inpatient section to add more negative pressure isolation beds for inpatients. A surge plan has been put in place to provide staffing for this expanded bed capacity.

COVID-19 Testing Site – The hospital now has a drive-through testing site. It is open Monday-Friday and possibly on weekends as well (days and hours are subject to change). Patients must have an order from their doctor and an appointment. Call 203-437-6815 to schedule.

COVID-19 Hotline – Patients with questions related to the COVID-19 crisis can call the information hotline at 203-204-1053.

COVID-19 Informational Links – Please click on the name of the source below to access the link.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[State OF CT Tracking Site](#)

[John Hopkins Website](#)

[Tableau Public](#)

[CT Regional Data](#)

[CT.GOV Covid19 data](#)

Food Security Task Force – Task force members have been instrumental in supporting the food and volunteer needs of the 5 local pantries. The bulk food purchases through Bozzuto's (a wholesale distributor based in Cheshire) continue to provide needed inventory on a monthly basis. TEAM's Lisa Savoid is assisting with the coordination of volunteers, and the PRC's Beth Comerford stepped in to coordinate operations at the Christ Episcopal Church food pantry to help keep it open during this crisis. Special thanks to all who have been volunteering their time to ensure that Valley residents' food needs are being met.

Valley Council of Health and Human Services – The Council is holding bi-weekly conference call briefings to keep all members updated on COVID-19 related activities in the Valley.

Current Projects

CORE RESEARCH PROJECT: Improving Health in Low Income Communities: Virtual Delivery of a Diabetes Prevention Program Facilitated with Community Care Coordination

This project, funded through September 2024 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will assess the feasibility and health impacts of offering a virtually-delivered Diabetes Prevention Program (vDPP), facilitated by community health workers and hospital-based community nurses, to low-income adults at risk for type 2 diabetes who reside in New Haven, Ansonia, and Derby. It will address barriers that prevent people with limited resources from successfully participating in lifestyle interventions.

Since funding began last September, we have been planning Year 1 formative research activities. Our full team meets twice monthly to guide overall project planning and our choice of a digital vDPP platform, supplemented by subcommittee meetings to finalize our assessment instruments (such as surveys and clinical measures) and plan focus groups and stakeholder interviews.

We have selected a platform from incentaHealth, a digital health company, to deliver the vDPP. We have planned the content for focus groups with local residents who represent the target population. The purpose is to assess their: (1) attitudes towards healthy eating and exercise; (2) perceived barriers to healthy eating and being physically active; (3) attitudes towards web-based and mobile phone apps; (4) and perceived barriers to using these apps. Ashley Hagaman, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor at the Yale School of Public Health, provided training to moderators and coders on conducting focus groups (March 5) and coding/analyzing focus group data (March 13). We have planned the content for facilitated interviews with stakeholders who work with adults with limited resources in Ansonia/Derby and New Haven. These include clinicians, housing authority directors, residential housing coordinators, social service agency staff, community health workers, and community health nurses. The purpose is to seek their perspective and advice on what might help or hinder the success of a vDPP when offered in low-income communities.

We are revising our study timeline and plans (including the timing of focus groups, interviews, and a planned 16 week pilot study of the vDPP, and the means of implementing these study activities) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to temporary restrictions on interacting directly with study participants. We hope to resume these activities soon. For more information, contact PRC Co-Director Beth Comerford at beth.comerford@yalegriffinprc.org or Co-Director Kathleen Duffany at kathleen.oconnorduffany@yale.edu.

NOW RECRUITING: The Impact of Consumption of Eggs in the Context of Plant-based Diets on Endothelial Function, Diet Quality, and Cardio-metabolic Risk Factors in Adults at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Study Details: This randomized controlled crossover study will assess the impact of including 2 eggs daily for 6 weeks in an otherwise vegan diet, compared with a vegan diet without eggs, on endothelial function (a measure of cardiovascular health), other cardio-metabolic risk factors, and dietary patterns in 35 adults at risk for type 2 diabetes. People who either have diabetes or are at risk for developing it have an increased likelihood of developing cardiovascular disease. Plant-based diets are recommended to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, as long as steps are taken to ensure adequate nutrient intake. Vegan diets that exclude all foods from animal sources require especially careful planning to ensure optimal intake of protein and other nutrients. Because eggs contain high-quality protein and are rich in certain vitamins and minerals, adding eggs to a vegan diet could potentially improve diet quality. Before recommending that adults at risk for type 2 diabetes add eggs to an otherwise vegan diet, it is important to first assess the effects of eating eggs on their risk for cardiovascular disease. Study funding is provided by the Egg Nutrition Center.



Who We're Recruiting: Men and women ages 25-75 years who are non-smokers and are at risk for type 2 diabetes (postmenopausal women must not be on hormone replacement therapy).

What Will Happen: Each study participant will follow both diets (one with eggs, one without eggs) over the course of the study, and will receive dietary instructions and guidance from a registered dietitian during both dietary phases of this study.

Outcome Measures: include endothelial function, serum lipids, body composition, body weight, waist circumference, blood pressure, fasting insulin and fasting blood glucose, nutrient intake, and diet quality.

Compensation: Study participants will receive free health testing, free eggs, grocery store gift cards to purchase vegan foods, and a total of \$600 for completing the study.

For More Information: Contact Rockiy Ayetey (email rockiy.ayetey@yalegriffinprc.org, phone 203-732-1265 ext. 300).

Publications

Litchman T, Roy B, Kumar A, Sharma A, **Njike V**, Nowak RJ. *Differential Response to Rituximab in Anti-AChR and Anti-MuSK Positive Myasthenia Gravis Patients: A Single-Center Retrospective Study.* J Neurol Sci. 2020 Apr 15;411:116690.

In-Service / Training Opportunities

[Social Marketing Training](#)

The Community Health Improvement Plan's Heart Disease Working Group, co-chaired by co-director Beth Comerford, has secured funding from the Valley Community Foundation and Griffin Hospital to support dedicated training and consulting in social marketing for its work over the next two years. Dr. Mahmooda Pasha of the University of South Florida will conduct the remote training sessions during June and July and work with the team to develop and implement a social marketing program aimed at reducing premature deaths due to heart disease in the Valley. For more information, contact Beth Comerford, MS at beth.comerford@yalegriffinprc.org

[Journal Club](#)

You are invited to join us at our Journal Club meetings or other professional development sessions, usually held every other month. We review and critique publications on topics such as community-based research, clinical research, and public health. This helps us stay up-to-date on research findings. Occasionally, we devote these sessions to reviewing recent findings from our own studies.

Our next Journal Club will be held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday, June 16 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. We plan to discuss the following article:

Ciemins EL, Coon PJ, Coombs NC, Holloway BL, et al. *Intent-to-treat analysis of a simultaneous multisite telehealth diabetes prevention program*. BMJ Open Diabetes Res Care. 2018 Apr 21;6(1):e000515. doi:10.1136/bmjdr-2018-000515.

A free full text version of the article is available [here](#):

If you would like to receive an invitation to the Zoom meeting, please contact Katherine LaMonaca at katherine.lamonaca@yale.edu

If you have questions about the journal club or accessing the article, please contact Dr. Valentine Njike at valentine.njike@yalegriffinprc.org, or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 304.

Let's Stay in Touch

Let us know what you are doing and how our research might assist you in your work. Please contact Beth Comerford, MS, PRC Co-Director (beth.comerford@yalegriffinprc.org) or the staff listed in this **Newsflash**.

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