

The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

Newsflash

Fall 2017 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. It serves as a communication tool for our Community Committee members, and our colleagues in academia, education, clinical settings, and social service agencies. 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 <http://www.yalegriffinprc.org>

PRC Updates

Welcome to our fall interns:

- **Brittany Craig** and **Alexis Watcke** are undergraduate students in Public Health at Southern CT State University who both expect to graduate in December 2017. They will work on projects related to our VITAHLS initiative, and on other PRC projects as well.

Current Projects

UPDATE - Valley Initiative to Advance Health & Learning in Schools (VITAHLS)

This initiative, led by the PRC and Griffin Hospital in partnership with school and community partners, aims to develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain comprehensive school-based programming focusing on nutrition and physical activity for PreK-12 students. Our school partners are the Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, Shelton and Naugatuck school districts, and Emmett O'Brien Regional Technical School. For more information, contact VITAHLS Coordinator Kim Doughty (email kim.doughty@yalegriffinprc.org).

- *Kinesthetic Classrooms Project in the Seymour Public Schools*

In response to a grant proposal written in partnership with the PRC, the Seymour Public Schools district has recently received \$10,000 in funding from the Katharine Matthies Foundation to support the purchase of kinesthetic equipment for use in Bungay Elementary School classrooms in grades K-5. The kinesthetic (movement-promoting) equipment will include pedal desks that allow for students to move while seated in the classroom during regular instruction time, thus increasing their daily physical activity levels. In addition to providing health benefits, regular physical activity has also been shown to improve cognition, attentiveness, and academic achievement, and to reduce disciplinary referrals. The PRC plans to use a combination of surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups to determine the feasibility and acceptability of kinesthetic equipment in the classroom setting. In addition, we plan to record the frequency of equipment use by students using teacher logs, and to determine the effects of kinesthetic activity in the classroom on students' attentiveness, behavior, academic performance, and attendance. The evaluation results will be used to optimize the use of existing equipment and inform any additional equipment purchases.

UPDATE – Community Health Opportunities Organized with Schools at the Epicenter (CHOOSE)

Our core research project for this 5-year CDC funding cycle expands within/beyond VITAHLS school districts to include other health promotion “portals” as well in their respective communities.

• NOW RECRUITING! Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program

- **Study details:** The PRC has partnered with Wholesome Wave®, a Bridgeport-based non-profit, to pilot test an adaptation of its Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program, which has previously been offered elsewhere in clinical settings. As part of CHOOSE, we will offer this program in a worksite “portal” (Griffin Hospital) and examine its impact on participants’ fruit and vegetable purchases and intake, along with their diet quality and health-related outcomes.
- **Who we’re recruiting:** All Griffin Hospitals who are able to participate in weekly lunch & learn nutrition and cooking workshops for a 10-week period.
- **What will happen:** 60 participants will be randomly assigned to either the fruit and vegetable prescription program (30 participants) or control/no intervention (30 participants). Those in the fruit and vegetable group will attend 10 sessions (45 minutes each) and receive coupons/vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables. The sessions will focus on delicious, nutritious, affordable, simple, and quick meal preparation.
- **Outcome measures:** We will collect data from participants at 3 time points if assigned to the fruit and vegetable group, or at 2 time points if assigned to the control group. They will be asked to: complete surveys on their food and beverage intake, household meal practices, cooking skills, physical activity, and medication use; and have the research team track their food purchases and measure their body mass index, body composition, waist size, blood pressure, serum lipids, and hemoglobin A1C. Those in the fruit and vegetable group will complete a brief survey at the end of each weekly session.
- **Compensation:** All participants will receive a \$50 gift card at each of the data collection time points (3 time points for the intervention group, 2 for the control group). Those in the intervention group will receive weekly vouchers/incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables for their families.
- **How to apply:** Contact Rockiy Ayettey (email rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org, phone 203-732-1265 ext. 300) or Kim Doughty (kim.doughty@yalegriffinprc.org, phone 203-732-1265 ext. 305).

NOW RECRUITING! A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Study of Mindfulness Meditation in Treating Insomnia in Multiple Sclerosis

- **Study details:** The State of CT, through its Biomedical Research Trust Fund, has provided funding to Griffin Hospital for research focusing on Multiple Sclerosis. The PRC is partnering with Joseph Guarnaccia, MD, Director of the Multiple Sclerosis Treatment Center at Griffin Hospital to develop and conduct this research. This study will examine whether Mindfulness Meditation Treatment for Insomnia (MMTI) is more effective than standard sleep hygiene counseling in treating insomnia and improving quality of life in MS patients. About 25% to 40% of MS patients suffer from chronic insomnia, leading to daytime impairment. Treatments for MS and its related symptoms may also contribute to insomnia. Benzodiazepines and other medications to manage insomnia may have adverse effects such as dependence/tolerance, cognitive dysfunction, and depression. Therefore, it is desirable to find effective nonpharmacological treatments for insomnia in MS patients. One potential treatment involves mindfulness - focusing one’s full attention on the present moment without judgment - which is hypothesized to increase the awareness of, and ability to tolerate, thoughts and emotions, which in turn can reduce perceptions of stress, anxiety, and pain. Prior research has shown some benefits of mindfulness in treating insomnia in general, and some benefits of stress reduction

techniques in managing MS-related insomnia. To date, however, there have been no studies on the efficacy of mindfulness techniques in treating MS-related insomnia.

- ***Who we're recruiting:*** Men and women age 18 years or older who have been diagnosed with MS, and who have a history of chronic insomnia, but who do not have obstructive sleep apnea or narcolepsy. They must be willing to visit Griffin Hospital once for clinical screening, and subsequent times for counseling or educational sessions and for study assessment purposes.
- ***What will happen:*** Each of the 90 adults who enrolls in this study will be randomly assigned to one of two groups. One group will take part in 10 weekly sessions of mindfulness-based training for insomnia. The other group will attend a counseling session on sleep hygiene, and will be invited to attend a 2-hour session on mindfulness once their role in the study is complete. During the study, members of both groups will wear Fitbits each day for several weeks to record their sleep data. At two study time points, they will complete a set of questionnaires and will also visit Griffin for clinical assessments.
- ***Compensation:*** Participants will be compensated a total of \$200 over the duration of this study. All study visits and interventions, including MBTI sessions, will be free of charge.
- ***How to apply:*** Contact Sue Acheychek by email at susan.acheychek@yalegriffinprc.org, or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 220, or Ms. Rockiy Ayettey by email at rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 300.

UPDATE – Community Alliance for Research and Engagement

The Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE), based in New Haven, extends the PRC's work with a mission to improve health in New Haven. CARE, in partnership with the New Haven community, is working in tandem with the PRC to take action against chronic diseases and other challenges that threaten the health of community members.

- ***Urban Farming Comes to Campus:*** In our summer Newsflash issue, we reported on a new garden-based wellness program for New Haven area residents who want to learn about growing fresh fruits and vegetables, nutrition, and healthy cooking. Through a partnership between CARE, the Southern CT State University (SCSU) Office of Sustainability, and New Haven Farms, this program expanded and improved the university's organic garden. We are now providing a progress report on the program's implementation over the summer. With oversight from SCSU Sustainability Office Coordinator Suzanne Huminski and CARE Director Alycia Santilli, SCSU student interns visited New Haven Farms to learn about its farm and 16-week health education program. Two public health interns then adapted the program's curriculum to plan and pilot their own 6-week garden-based program. Two sustainability interns cared for the garden, and worked with participants on growing and harvesting vegetables. A core group of 11 participants from nearby low-income neighborhoods attended the sessions on Tuesday evenings from July through mid-August. Each session included nutrition education, a garden tour, a cooking demonstration provided by the interns and/or guest chefs, and free produce from the garden. Participants had the opportunity to see the produce go from farm to plate, and enjoyed taking home what they learned and sharing it with their families. The garden has become very productive (yielding 812 pounds of produce as of late September), and portions of the harvest are donated to a local soup kitchen. Santilli, describing the experience as "a fantastic university-community partnership," said that the partners hope to start fundraising to create a more institutionalized version of the program based on the success of the pilot phase.

Presentations

David Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, PRC Director, delivered the following presentations:

- Presentation on September 8th at the 2017 OMP Symposium in Chicago, IL

- *Knowing What to Eat, Refusing to Swallow It* on September 29th at the Rhode Island Certified Diabetes Outpatient Educators Annual Symposium in Warwick, RI.

Valentine Njike, MD, PRC Assistant Director of Research & Evaluation, provided lectures on biostatistics on September 1st and September 8th for the Internal Medicine and Preventive Medicine residency programs at Griffin Hospital.

Publications

Adams ML, Grandpre J, **Katz DL**, Shenson D. *Linear Association between Number of Modifiable Risk Factors and Multiple Chronic Conditions: Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*. Prev Med. 2017 Sep 13. pii: S0091-7435(17)30337-7. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.09.013. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 28917949.

Berman MA, Appelbaum KJ, Edwards KL, Eisenberg DM, **Katz DL**. *FareWell and the How of Lifestyle Medicine*. Am Journal Lifestyle Med. 2017 July;11(4):314-317. doi:10.1177/1559827617701411.

In-Service / Training Opportunities

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. It also allows us to examine publications (for the research questions, study design, results and conclusions) so we can apply the knowledge gained and lessons learned to the design of our own projects. Occasionally, we devote these sessions to reviewing recent findings from our own studies.

Our next meeting will be held at the PRC on the second floor of Griffin Hospital.

- **Tuesday, October 10th from 2:00-3:00 p.m.**
Taveras EM, Perkins M, Anand S, et al. *Clinical Effectiveness of the Massachusetts Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Initiative among Low-income Children*. Obesity (Silver Spring). 2017 Jul;25(7):1159-1166. doi:10.1002/oby.21866.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Valentine Njike by email at valentine.njike@yalegriffinprc.org, or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 304.

Let's Stay in Touch

We want to hear from you – let us know what you are doing and how our research might assist you in your work. Please contact Beth Comerford, MS, Deputy Director (beth.comerford@yalegriffinprc.org) or any of the staff listed in this **Newsflash**.

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The Yale-Griffin PRC is a member of the Prevention Research Centers Program.



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