

# The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

## *Newsflash*

Summer 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:](http://www.yalegriffinprc.org)

Please visit our website at <http://www.yalegriffinprc.org>

### *PRC Updates*

#### *Thank You to Our PRC Summer Interns:*

- **Amanda Audette** is completing an undergraduate public health degree at Southern CT State University. During her internship, she worked on several projects related to the VITAHLS initiative.
- **Ryan Carney** is completing an undergraduate public health degree at Southern CT State University. During his internship, he worked on our physical activity resource guide and VITAHLS projects.
- **Nelson Del Pilar** is a medical school student at the San Juan Bautista School of Medicine in Puerto Rico. At the PRC, he conducted literature reviews for the multiple sclerosis project and assisted with manuscript preparation.
- **Grace Ofosu-Apea, MD** is working with Dr. Valentine Njike and Dr. Philip Sarrel, MD on additional analyses of data involving mortality rates among post-menopausal women using hormone replacement therapy. This builds on prior work/publication done by Drs. Sarrel, Katz and Njike.
- **Sarah Reeping, RD, CD-N**, a registered dietitian at St. Francis Hospital, completed an MPH internship here through the University of New England. She worked on VITAHLS-related projects, including a school breakfast focus group project conducted with students in Ansonia and Shelton.

### *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](mailto:kim.doughty@yalegriffinprc.org)).

- **Healthy Cooking Challenge:** On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the finals of the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Healthy Cooking Challenge took place in the Griffin Hospital Dining Room. This year's theme was "healthy comfort foods", with 5 students in grades 5-8 from Valley schools and their winning recipes from their local competitions in school districts having advanced to the finals. Contestants included: Victoria Caiza from Seymour Middle School; Colin Cepeda from Mead School in Ansonia; Emma Jackson from Western

Elementary School in Naugatuck; Kayla Kilincoglu from Perry Hill School in Shelton; and Anthony Nakis from Derby Middle School. John Vazzano, chef and owner of Vazzy's restaurants, served as master of ceremonies. Judges for the competition included Ansonia Mayor David Cassetti, Sarah Widomski from Derby, Naugatuck Mayor N. Warren "Pete" Hess III, and Seymour First Selectman Kurt Miller. All finalists received a personalized apron, a gardening basket from Massaro Community Farm, a gift card to Sports Center of Connecticut, and other items. Anthony Nakis, the grand prize winner, received all of this plus additional prizes.



**Emma**



**Victoria**



**Anthony**



**Kayla**



**Colin**



### **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.

- ***Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program*** – 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” and examine its impact on participants’ fruit and vegetable purchases and intake, along with their diet quality and health-related outcomes. It will be targeted to Griffin Hospital employees whose children are enrolled in schools involved in our VITAHLS initiative. This will let us link our school-based VITAHLS population to the families of students in these schools. A total of 60 participants will be randomly assigned to one of two groups: fruit and vegetable prescription program (30 participants) or control/no intervention (30 participants). Those in the fruit and vegetable prescription program will receive advice and tips to eat more fruits and vegetables, offered through a set of 10 skill-building educational sessions (45 minutes each), along with financial incentives (coupons/vouchers) to purchase fruits and vegetables. The sessions will focus on delicious, nutritious, affordable, simple and quick meal preparation. They will be led by a multidisciplinary team comprised of a chef/instructor, a nutritionist and/or dietitian, MD and/or Preventive Medicine Resident, and PRC staff. All participants will receive a \$50 gift card at each of the study assessment time points (3 time points for the intervention group, 2 for the control group). For more information, contact Ms. Rockiy Ayettey (email [rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org](mailto:rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org), phone 203-732-1265 ext. 300).

## **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, and 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:*** If you or someone you know is interested in participating, contact Sue Acheychek by email at [susan.acheychek@yalegriffinprc.org](mailto:susan.acheychek@yalegriffinprc.org), or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 220, or Ms. Rockiy Ayettey by email at [rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org](mailto:rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org) or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 300.

## **UPDATE – Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE)**

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.

- ***Expansion of Community Garden in New Haven:*** CARE and the Southern CT State University (SCSU) Office of Sustainability are partnering with New Haven Farms to pilot a garden-based wellness program. SCSU has expanded its community garden for 2017 in order to invite New Haven residents to grow food and learn about health and wellness. Two MPH students, Meadeshia Mitchell and Abby Putzer, have developed a 6-week pilot program based on New Haven Farms' program, and have recruited 17 residents from nearby New Haven neighborhoods to participate. The wellness program targets adults who have diet-related chronic disease risk factors and is open to the whole family. During the summer growing season, families come for weekly cooking demonstrations,

nutrition classes, and gardening seminars. Participants take home a share of fresh produce each week, along with sets of culturally relevant, affordable, and nutritious recipes.



Photo credit: Isabel Chenoweth/SCSU

## Presentations

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

- *Lifestyle is the Medicine; What's the Spoon?* on April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Quinnipiac School of Medicine in Hamden, CT.
- Keynote presentation on April 21<sup>st</sup> at the Viva Fresh Produce Expo in Austin, TX.
- Presentation on May 4<sup>th</sup> at the Yale Pediatric Conference in New Haven, CT.
- Presentation on May 10<sup>th</sup> at Danbury Hospital in Danbury, CT.
- *Lifestyle Medicine, Past the Holes in Holism*, keynote presentation on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Pain Society) in Pittsburgh, PA.
- Keynote presentation on May 24<sup>th</sup> at the Kansas State of Wellness Symposium in Salina, KS.
- *The Basic Care & Feeding of Homo sapiens: Are We TRULY Clueless?* on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality & Healing in Minneapolis, MN.
- *Getting to Wellness: Of Science, Sense, & Elephense* on June 8<sup>th</sup> at Healthstat, Inc. in Charleston, SC.
- *Health, Truth, and the Bell Curve*, commencement addresses on June 17<sup>th</sup> at Bastyr University's campus in San Diego CA and on June 19<sup>th</sup> at Bastyr University's campus in Seattle, WA.

## Publications

- **Katz DL**, Storsberg J, Schmidt C. *Chasing the Fat Demon: Fat Chance, Buddy? (Editorial)*. Am J Immunol. 2017, 13 (2): 86.88.
- **Katz DL**, Frates EP, Bonnet JP, Gupta SK, Vartiainen E, Carmona RH. *Lifestyle as Medicine: The Case for a True Health Initiative*. Am J Health Promot. 2017 Jan 1:890117117705949. [Epub ahead of print]



- **Njike VY**, Annam R, Costales VC, Yarandi N, **Katz DL**. *Which Foods are Displaced in the Diets of Adults with Type 2 Diabetes with the Inclusion of Eggs in Their Diets? A Randomized, Controlled, Crossover Trial.* BMJ Open Diab Res Care 2017; 5:e000411.
- **Njike VY**, Kavak Y, **Treu JA**, **Doughty K**, **Katz DL**. *Snacking, Satiety, and Weight: A Randomized, Controlled Trial.* Am J Health Promot. 2017 Jul;31(4):296-301.
- Shuval K, Leonard T, Drope J, **Katz DL**, Patel AV, Maitin-Shepard M, Amir O, Grinstein A. *Physical Activity Counseling in Primary Care: Insights from Public Health and Behavioral Economics.* CA Cancer J Clin. 2017 May 6;67(3):233-244.
- **Treu JA**, **Doughty K**, Reynolds JS, **Njike VY**, **Katz DL**. Advancing School and Community Engagement Now for Disease Prevention (ASCEND). Am J Health Promot. 2017 Mar;31(2):143-152.

## *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 in September at the PRC on the second floor of Griffin Hospital (date and time to be announced).** If you have questions, please contact Dr. Valentine Njike by email at [valentine.njike@yalegriffinprc.org](mailto: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](mailto:beth.comerford@yalegriffinprc.org)) or any of the staff listed in this **Newsflash**.

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***Healthier Communities Together***

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