

The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

Newsflash

Winter 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

Our next Community Committee meeting will likely take place sometime in March. We will keep you posted on the details once we have finalized a date, time, and agenda for this meeting.

PRC Director David Katz, MD founds the True Health Initiative - Did you know that 80% of all chronic diseases can be prevented simply by adopting a healthful lifestyle? If this is so, then why do unacceptably high levels of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, and other chronic diseases still persist on a global scale? According to **Yale-Griffin PRC Director David Katz, MD**, the general public lacks clear and consistent advice about the role of lifestyle medicine in promoting health. Competing voices, profit-driven motives, and conflicting media messages have left many people confused about how best to improve their health.

To cut through this noise and educate the public about proven principles of lifestyle medicine, Dr. Katz has assembled a global coalition of more than 300 leading experts and influencers in lifestyle medicine, preventive medicine, public health, health journalism, environmentalism, sustainable agriculture, conservation, nutrition, and health care - known as the **True Health Initiative** - to agree upon and disseminate a set of unified messages about healthful, sustainable dietary patterns to target populations around the world. They agree on 6 core principles of healthy living that could add years to lives, and life to years: (1) consuming minimally-processed, mostly plant-based foods; (2) adopting a physically active lifestyle; (3) avoiding toxins such as tobacco and excess alcohol; (4) getting plenty of sleep; (5) reducing psychological stress; and (6) cultivating supportive relationships and social bonds.

Their vision is a world where all people live long and healthy lives, free of preventable chronic disease. For more information about the True Health Initiative, please visit <http://www.truehealthinitiative.org>. Individuals or organizations are invited to join the coalition at <http://www.truehealthinitiative.org/#/join>.

Welcome to PRC research volunteer Boma Princewell, MBBS, who completed physician training in 2013 and a medical internship in 2015 at the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria, and has interests in prevention research, nutrition, and preventive medicine. She has been working for the last few months with us as a research volunteer. Her roles include helping to analyze school data for our VITAHLS initiative, identifying tools to assess the impact of nutritional interventions, and taking part in the development of study protocols.

Current Projects

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

This initiative, led by the PRC and Griffin Hospital in partnership with 5 school districts, and several community partners, involves developing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining a comprehensive Valley-wide school-based program 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 by email at kim.doughty@yalegriffinprc.org.

- **VITAHLS Program Inventory Survey:** As of December 2016, nearly all of the schools in the VITAHLS school districts have completed this survey. It was created by the PRC to help understand the type and extent of VITAHLS-related programs and activities offered in each school during the last 2 school years, along with policies/practices in place to promote healthful eating and physical activity.
- **Working group meetings:** As part of our monthly meetings that take place during the school year, we are including periodic presentations by speakers from within and beyond the school districts. In December, Eric O'Toole, a physical education teacher from the Derby High School, presented on the activities of a recently-founded high school student wellness club, for which he serves as advisor.
- **VITAHLS subcommittees:** In addition to holding our monthly working group meetings during each school year, we have re-convened 3 subcommittees to address issues relating to nutrition, physical activity, and engagement/communication, respectively. The subcommittees will also meet on a monthly basis, and will develop goals and strategies to further the mission of VITAHLS in schools.

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

The PRC's core research project for this 5-year CDC funding cycle (October 2014 through September 2019) will compare the impact of 4 levels of interventions in 5 communities, with school districts serving as epicenters, and expanding within/beyond schools to other "portals" in their respective communities. The Valley Initiative to Advance Health and Learning in Schools (VITAHLS) is one component of CHOOSE. CHOOSE will use a multilevel approach to improve diet quality and physical activity in children and adults. Potential portals include schools, worksites, clinical settings, faith-based settings, and supermarkets. We will continue to develop/expand the VITAHLS initiative in Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, and Shelton schools, and have added the Naugatuck Public Schools to serve as a control/delayed intervention group. For more information, contact Kim Doughty by email at kim.doughty@yalegriffinprc.org.

- **Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program** – In our spring Newsflash issue, we described tentative plans to pilot a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program with patients of the Griffin Faculty Practice Plan's medical office in Ansonia. We still plan to pilot this program, but have altered our plans to shift from a clinic-based to a workplace-based health promotion model, targeted to Griffin Hospital staff whose children are enrolled in VITAHLS schools serving as CHOOSE study intervention sites. This will let us link our school-based VITAHLS population to the families of students enrolled in these schools. The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program was created by Wholesome Wave, a Bridgeport-based nonprofit that works to build sustainable food systems and make locally grown produce available to underserved community members. As part of the program, participants will receive advice and tips to eat more fruits and vegetables, plus financial incentives to buy them. We will keep you posted on our plans. For more information, contact Ms. Rockiy Ayettey (email rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org, phone 203-732-1265 ext. 300).

- **Physical Activity Resource Guide** - As part of a collaborate effort with the Naugatuck Valley Health Department, Valley YMCA, retired Valley United Way President Jack Walsh, and other interested community partners, the PRC plans to develop a physical activity resource guide for residents of communities served by Griffin Hospital. The guide will feature no-cost and low-cost resources such as walking or hiking trails, bicycle lanes, school track facilities, swimming, ice skating, state parks, local parks, and community parks & recreation sites. Depending on the level of funding available for this project (i.e., on whether we can obtain supplemental funding), the guide could range from a simple list of resources and links, to a list combined with a map, to an interactive web-based application. The final product could be made available on websites of a variety of community organizations, which may include—but are not limited to—the Naugatuck Valley Health District, schools and school districts, Griffin Hospital, the Valley YMCA, and city and town governments. We also plan to promote the guide to primary care providers as a resource they can use for their patients. For more information, contact Sue Acheychek (email susan.acheychek@yalegriffinprc.org, phone 203-732-1265 x220).

Grant Proposals and Awards

UPCOMING SUBMISSION

- **Effects of Pecan Consumption on Endothelial Function and Cardiometabolic Risk Factors in Adults at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes: A Randomized, Controlled, Crossover Trial**

As part of our clinical research work, the PRC recently conducted a study examining the health effects on walnuts on cardiovascular risk factors in adults at risk for Type 2 diabetes, who have an increased risk for cardiovascular events in comparison to the general population. We would now like to determine the health effects of other types of tree nuts, including pecans, in a similar group of adults. In December, we submitted a pre-proposal to the National Pecan Shellers Association for a study to examine the effects of pecans on endothelial function (a surrogate marker of cardiovascular risk) in adults at risk for Type 2 diabetes, Foods that are low in fat and calories, and high in fiber, with a focus on fruit, vegetables and whole grains are typically recommended to prevent the progression from prediabetes to diabetes. Tree nuts, despite their high fat content, have been shown to improve glycemic control and blood lipids in Type 2 diabetes patients. If we receive permission to write a full proposal, we will provide more details in a future Newsflash issue.

Presentations

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

- *Lifestyle is the Medicine; What's the Spoon?* on November 3rd at the MD Forum in Las Vegas, NV.
- *Lifestyle is the Medicine; What's the Spoon?* on November 10th at the Margo Krasnoff Memorial Foundation's Town Hall Forum held at Dartmouth College in Lebanon, NH.
- *The Basic Care and Feeding of Homo Sapiens: Are We TRULY Clueless?* on November 11th at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center's Medical Grand Rounds in Lebanon, NH.
- Presentation on December 1st at the 7th International Forum on Food and Nutrition, held at the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition in Milan, Italy.

Kim Doughty, MPH, PhD, Research Associate, and VITAHLS Coordinator, presented *Nutrition in Early Childhood Education: Regulations, Best Practices, and Innovations*, a professional development session held on December 14th at the Ansonia School Readiness Council, to preschool teachers and program directors from the Ansonia Public Schools, Julia Day Nursery, and Valley YMCA.

Niloufarsadat Yarandi, MD, medical resident at Griffin Hospital, presented a poster session on the PRC study *Inclusion of Walnut in the Diets of Adults at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes and Their Dietary Pattern Changes: A Randomized, Controlled, Cross-over Trial* at the 9th Annual World Congress on Prevention of Diabetes and Its Complications, held on December 2nd to 4th in Atlanta, GA.

Publications

- **Katz DL.** *The Mass of Humanity and the Weight of the World: Obesity and the Environment at a Confluence of Causes.* Curr Obes Rep. 2016 Dec;5(4):386-388. Review.
- **Njike VY, Yarandi N, Petraro P, Ayettey RG, Treu JA, Katz DL.** *Inclusion of Walnut in the Diets of Adults at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes and their Dietary Pattern Changes: A Randomized, Controlled, Crossover Trial.* BMJ Open Diabetes Res Care. 2016 Oct 19;4(1):e000293.
- Patel AA, Lopez NV, Lawless HT, **Njike V**, Beleche M, **Katz DL.** *Reducing Calories, Fat, Saturated Fat, and Sodium in Restaurant Menu Items: Effects on Consumer Acceptance.* Obesity (Silver Spring). 2016 Dec;24(12):2497-2508.

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, February 14th from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.**
Johnson DB, Podrabsky M, Rocha A, Otten JJ. *Effect of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act on the Nutritional Quality of Meals Selected by Students and School Lunch Participation Rates.* JAMA Pediatr. 2016 Jan;170(1):e153918. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.3918.

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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