

Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Biannual Newsletter August 2012 thru April 2013



Happy Birthday!!!



Message from Judy

Dear Colleagues,

Happy Birthday to us! On Monday, April 1, 2013, our Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine was thirty years old, a very respectable age reflecting our success and sustainability. We will celebrate our birthday May 13, 2013 at the Full Division Meeting. We also are planning a bigger bash October 17, 2013 when some of our past faculty and staff will be with us. (We need volunteers to help plan a fun celebration.) The division started with four people, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Rob Goldberg, James E. Dalen, and myself. The person with the vision was Jim Dalen, then Chair of Medicine. He was chair from 1977-1988. Jim made sure his name was on our stationery so we would be “safe” from people who were concerned about our presence in Medicine. [continued on next page]



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Message from Judy, continued

Our division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine was the only such division in a Department of Medicine in the country. I believe it still is. When we became a division in 1983 the Society of Behavioral Medicine was only four years old. People were not yet convinced that behavior mattered in health and disease. Now, thirty years later, there is no doubt that behavior matters - "The breath of connections between behavior and health is formidable". It is now well documented that greater than 80% of the problems a primary care clinician sees in clinic are behaviorally related and the evidence is solid that these behaviors can be altered given the appropriate clinical and community-based interventions.

We are working in exciting and challenging times. Exciting, given the rapid pace by which science and technology are advancing and the new ideas of our faculty and staff are evolving. Challenging, given that less funding is available and there is strong competition for it. As a division we embrace a shared vision: "Healthy behaviors, healthy people and healthy communities" and understand that strong partnerships, creativity, diversification and flexibility are needed. We have an amazingly innovative and talented team of staff and faculty. At this point our funding continues to be robust with several new grants coming in each year. In thirty years working as a team we have accomplished a lot and are going strong. Thank you for all that you do and are, and for the commitment, passion, and joy you bring with you each day.

Happy Birthday to us!

Fisher EB, Fitzgibbon ML, Glasgow RE, Haire-Joshu D, Hayman LL, Kaplan RM, Nanney MS, Ockene JK. Behavior Matters. Am J Prev Med, 40(5):e15-e30, 2011. PMCID: PMC3137947

evolve...

Integrating the Wisdom and Pragmatism of Mindfulness
into Your Life, Communities and Organizations

The Center for Mindfulness' *evolve...* programs see growth

Since the official launch of *evolve...* in July 2013, the interest in community and workplace mindfulness programs continues to grow.

Building on a robust history and experience of offering mindfulness programs and trainings to community organizations, non-profits, and corporate enterprises, we developed customized programs and trainings that acutely meet the needs of the organizations we serve. In addition, we are developing new broad spectrum, multi-module trainings that prepare large educational and health care institutions to disseminate their own mindfulness trainings and programs to their communities and constituents.

This very exciting work enables the Center to expand the ways in which we fulfill our mission, bringing mindfulness into the larger society.

To learn more about *evolve...*, please visit: www.umassmed.edu/cfm/evolve or contact Merin MacDonald at merin.macdonald@umassmed.edu – 508-856-5144.

Be the Change for Health: Empowering Children to Help their Families Eat Healthy and Be Active



Over a third of 1st grade children in Worcester were overweight or obese from 2008-2009, indicating a pressing need for innovative ways to engage children and parents in healthy eating and physical activity. Empowering children to help their families engage in healthy weight-related behaviors, such as diet and physical activity, has tremendous potential for childhood obesity prevention and overall health promotion.

The development, implementation, and evaluation of *Be the Change for Health*, a program targeting children as key agents of behavior change, is a collaboration between the Worcester County Prevention Research Center (WC-PRC), the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center (EMKCHC), and the Roosevelt Elementary School and its school-based health center. Key partners include: Antonia McGuire, President and CEO of the EMKCHC and member of the WC-PRC Steering Committee, Dr. Mary Fierro, Director at the EMKCHC, Dr. Lori Pbert, a WC-PRC Steering Committee faculty member, and Dr. Monica Wang, a WC-PRC-funded postdoctoral fellow.

Be the Change for Health is a 7-week program delivered through the school-based health center setting and is designed to provide 3rd and 4th grade children with skills and tools to help their families make better food choices and increase physical activity. Program participants will meet weekly in one-hour group-based sessions after school throughout the spring of 2013. Group activities are organized around a "Flat Stanley" theme. Flat Stanley is the story of a little boy who became flat after a bulletin board fell on him. Initially dismayed to be flat, Stanley soon discovered some benefits (e.g., he could be mailed to far-away places). Since his creation (~40 years ago), elementary school-age children have participated in many Flat Stanley projects, initially around learning about geography.

Be the Change for Health incorporates the Flat Stanley theme around the idea that Stanley wants to resume his original 3-D size and shape. To do this, he will need accurate information about healthy eating and physical activity. Through interactive weekly after-school sessions (each week covering a different eating or physical activity topic or skill), participants will become expert helpers who can make suggestions to Flat Stanley about healthy foods he might want to eat and physical activities he might enjoy. Kathleen Herrman and Leah Pernicaro (doctoral psychology interns at the EMKCHC Behavioral Health/Social Services Department) and Drs. Fierro, Pbert, and Wang developed the curriculum materials. Program sessions will be led by the interns. Participants will be encouraged through "homework" activities to try out the skills, activities, and choices they have learned (i.e., a new healthy snack recipe, a different type of physical activity) with their families. Participants will be contacted each week to address any problems or challenges experienced and help to maintain interest in the program.

Program feasibility and preliminary effectiveness will be pilot-tested among 12 child participants and at least one parent/caregiver per child. Children and parents will report their food choices and physical activity behaviors before and after the program. If *Be the Change for Health* demonstrates feasibility and preliminary effectiveness, a longer-term randomized controlled trial will be conducted to explore whether changes in eating and physical activity are unique to the program and maintained over time.

Tobacco Treatment Specialist Training in Saudi Arabia

By Denise Jolicoeur



The UMass Tobacco Treatment Specialist (TTS) Training and Certification Program has been attended by participants from all over North America – and a few people from much farther away. In 2005 we welcomed a nurse educator, Wafa Al-Azmi, from the Saudi Aramco Medical Services Organization (SAMSO) to our 5-day TTS training program held in Worcester. She had traveled from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia to learn more about tobacco dependence treatment in order to develop a treatment program for employees and patients of SAMSO. Wafa continued on and achieved Entry-Level TTS certification in 2008 and would occasionally contact us for advice and information. Imagine our surprise when we received a request to conduct our training in Saudi Arabia!

After building their treatment program and training other staff on the basics of tobacco dependence treatment SAMSO recognized the need for more in-depth training. Aida Rouhana, who attended TTS training at the Mayo Clinic, contacted us and the long process of agreeing on a scope of work and fee structure was initiated. The Office of Global Health was invaluable in providing guidance and support during this time and after more than a year of communication we were able to come to agreement.

In September 2012 I traveled to Dhahran and together with some local staff conducted our TTS training program with 13 SAMSO staff. Although the immigration process was a bit nerve-wracking (and 2 hours long) once I met with my colleagues I was warmly welcomed and treated as a special guest. The class was made up of a mix of physicians, nurses and health educators with many whose homes are in other countries. Saudi Arabia, the US, Ireland, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon were all represented – and English was not the first language for most of the students. This did not stop them from being fully engaged and interested in the topic area. Although tobacco use is officially banned in Saudi Arabia there is a substantial problem with cigarette and shisha (waterpipe) smoking and these health care providers are eager to provide assistance. I will fondly remember the honest and open conversations that we had during training regarding the challenges and similarities of addressing tobacco dependence in their environment.

Since September Wafa and Aida have both achieved Master Level TTS certification from our program. When I asked why they sought out UMass they replied that our ongoing willingness to provide support and guidance to them put us above other training programs. It is hoped that some of the trainees will continue on to achieve certification. And we will continue to provide what assistance we can to our colleagues in Saudi Arabia.

Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Research Seminar Series

Join us for the next research seminar:

Monica Wang, PhD

“Childhood Obesity Prevention Among Underserved Youth: A Family – and Community-Based Approach ”

April 22, S1-123, 12-1pm

The division research seminars are held on the 4th Monday of each month. Research topics vary and range from epidemiological, clinical, and community-based approaches to understanding, preventing, or treatment of cardiovascular disease or cancer. Presenters from within our division and elsewhere are invited to present recent study findings or new grant proposals for feedback.

Spring Schedule:

April 22: Monica Wang, PhD
May 20: Yunsheng Ma, PhD & Jinsong Wang
June 17: Jay Maddock, PhD
July TBD: Nicole Wedick, PhD

**Seminars are held in S1– 123
12:00-1:00 pm
Light refreshments are available.**

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the newsletter!
If you would like to contribute to any part of the next newsletter, please send your information to the committee.

The newsletter committee welcomes suggestions and comments.
Please feel free to email the committee members:

Jessica Oleski, Amy Borg, Nanette Vitali

