The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

Newsflash

November 2012

This electronic Newsflash is intended to keep you informed about our work and to invite you to participate in our various research, education and outreach activities. The Newsflash began as a communication tool for our Community Committee, but readership continues to expand to include colleagues in academia, clinical settings and social service agencies around the state. If you see ways that we can work together on shared projects, please let us know.

In this Newsflash you will find the following information:

- PRC News, Activity, and Research Findings
- Grant Submissions and Awards
- Presentations and Manuscript Publications
- In-Service Training Opportunities

For a complete list of our projects, please visit our website at www.yalegriffinprc.org.

PRC News

Our next Community Committee meeting will be held on Monday, January 21, 2013 from noon to 2:00.

Griffin Hospital Cafeteria Adds NuVal Scores to Foods – In mid-October, Griffin Hospital expanded its use of the NuVal Nutritional Scoring System to a la carte foods sold in the cafeteria. The hospital launched the expansion with free snacks, giveaway games, activities, an interactive table, Lunch n’ Learn sessions, and promotions sponsored by the Ansonia Big Y supermarket. The topic of the half-hour talks was “Using NuVal to Trade Up on Nutrition.” For the past year, the hospital has already been using the NuVal system to help hospital staff, visitors, and local residents choose healthful packaged foods in the vending machines. The NuVal Nutritional Scoring system, developed by PRC Director Dr. David Katz and a team of nutrition experts, rates foods on a scale of 1 to 100 (the higher the number, the better the nutrition) based on their overall nutritional value, and is used in many supermarkets across the country, including the Big Y and Price Chopper stores in CT. For more information about the NuVal Nutritional Scoring System, see http://www.nuval.com.

Update on NuVal in the Derby Public Schools - A pilot test of the NuVal Nutritional Scoring System was launched on October 22nd in the Derby High School. Derby High School Principal Greg Gaillard played a key role in orchestrating the implementation, and the NuVal company provided advance training on the food scoring system to school staff. The goal is to inform students about the variation in nutritional quality and the range of scores within each category of foods, get them thinking about the power of choice, and encourage them to make healthier food choices. NuVal scores have been posted next to foods available in the school cafeterias and vending machines. In addition to having access to NuVal scores, students will take part in educational programs about health and nutrition at school, and their families will have access to education about how to receive the best nutrition for their grocery dollars. The nearby Big Y supermarket in Ansonia is playing a complementary role, since NuVal scores are also available in Big Y stores. We will evaluate this project by assessing changes in students’ attitudes, knowledge, and self-efficacy, along with changes in food products purchased at school. The Derby Public Schools is the first school system on the East Coast to implement NuVal. This project is part of the Valley Initiative to Advance Health and Learning in Schools (VITAHLs) launched by Griffin Hospital and the Prevention Research Center. Funding to support NuVal in the Derby High School has been provided by the Turn the Tide Foundation (www.turnthetidefoundation.org) through the generous support of the California Walnut Board and Commission.
NOW RECRUITING!

- **Dose and Response to Chocolate (DARC)** – The PRC and Boston Medical Center have received $787,000 in funding from the Hershey Company for an 18-month study to compare the effects of 2 doses of cocoa consumption (5 vs. 10 grams of cocoa powder provided as a combination of chocolate and cocoa beverages) per day over an 8-week period on risk factors for cardiovascular disease in 120 adults with stage 1 hypertension. Specifically, we will look for any changes in participants’ blood pressure, blood vessel function (their ability to constrict and dilate as the heart pumps blood through them), serum lipids, glucose, insulin, body weight, and waist circumference. Cocoa-containing products are already known to have cardio-protective effects, perhaps due to their flavonoid content. Our own studies have shown that a dose of 10 grams of cocoa powder can lead to improved blood vessel function in overweight adults. We now want to learn whether the cardiovascular benefits of cocoa-containing products vary when compared to a smaller dose, and whether there is a direct impact on blood pressure. Because chocolate is a popular dietary source of cocoa but is high in calories and fat and often high in added sugar, it’s important to determine the minimum dose of cocoa that can provide “heart-healthy” benefits without affecting weight and blood sugar, if used in chocolate products. Results of this study will help guide recommendations for consumers’ daily lives.

  **The PRC is now recruiting 60 men and women age 18-75 years who have stage 1 hypertension (high blood pressure, with systolic pressure ranging from 140 to 159 and diastolic pressure ranging from 90 to 99) who are currently taking no more than one blood pressure medication, and who have a body mass index (BMI) of less than 35. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this study, please contact Ms. Rockiy Ayettey by email at rockiy.ayettey@yalegriffinprc.org or by phone at 203-732-1265 ext. 300.**

- **Exploring Massage Benefits for Arthritis of the Knee (EMBARK)** – The National Institutes of Health (NIH) awarded a $2.75 million shared grant to Duke Integrative Medicine and its key research partners at the Yale-Griffin PRC and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) to investigate the impact of massage therapy on people with osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee. The combined research team will conduct a randomized controlled trial over a 4-year period to definitively evaluate the impact of an 8-week course of Swedish massage on pain, stiffness, and physical function in people with OA of the knee, how long the effects last over a one-year period, and the cost-effectiveness of this treatment. OA, a slowly progressive, degenerative disease of the joints that afflicts up to 40 million Americans, can lead to chronic pain and disability. Conventional treatments are often associated with incomplete pain relief and/or side effects of pharmacological treatments, and surgery requires a long period of recovery. Our initial pilot study in 2004 showed massage to be feasible and effective in treating OA of the knee, leading to improved flexibility, less pain, and improved range of motion lasting for several weeks after the treatment ended. A follow-up study (2009-2011) to determine an optimal “dose” found that a 60-minute massage offered once a week over an 8-week period was most effective and practical, compared to 60 minutes twice a week, or 30 minutes once or twice a week, thus establishing a standard for future trials. The effectiveness of massage for OA may be due to a variety of mechanisms, including stress reduction, increased blood and lymph circulation, decreased muscle strain, and/or improved function of joints or muscles. The new study will recruit more than 200 participants with OA of the knee and will follow each participant for a full year. Participants will be randomly assigned to receive Swedish massage therapy, light touch bodywork, or conventional care. Outcomes of interest include: joint pain, stiffness, and flexibility; physical function; and health care utilization and cost. For those who qualify, treatments will be available at the Integrative Medicine Center at Griffin Hospital in Derby, CT, Barnabas Health Ambulatory Care Center in Livingston, NJ, and Duke University in Durham, NC.

  **We are currently recruiting adults over 35 years of age with radiographically diagnosed osteoarthritis of the knee, who meet the American College of Rheumatology criteria for OA, are experiencing moderate pain, and are under the care of a board-certified primary care**
physician. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this study, please contact Michelle Pinto-Evans at 203-732-1265, ext. 218 or ext. 306, or email us at oamassage@gmail.com.

PROJECT UPDATES
Valley Initiative to Advance Health & Learning in Schools (VITAHLS) – This initiative, led by the Prevention Research Center and Griffin Hospital and in collaboration with 5 Valley School Districts, involves developing, implementing, evaluating and sustaining a comprehensive school-based program focusing on nutrition and physical activity. The goal is to reduce the prevalence of obesity, and promote health and academic readiness, in students in grades Pre-K through 12 in the Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton School Districts, and the Emmett O’Brien Regional Technical School. In our January and July 2012 Newsflash issues, we reported our initial progress on this multiyear project, which began in the fall of 2012 and focused last year on offering the Nutrition Detectives and ABC for Fitness programs in participating elementary schools and measuring students’ baseline body mass index (BMI) levels. This fall, we held a Family Fun Day/VITAHLS Kick-off event on October 21st for students and parents from participating schools, which included: a fun run; activities such as Zumba, yoga, kickball, and volleyball; nutrition activities and demonstrations; and healthful foods. The working group and its subcommittees are currently developing plans to offer nutrition and physical activity programming for upper-level grades as well. We also exploring additional options such as: promoting district-wide walking programs for students, staff, and parents; encouraging school staff to exercise during break times; partnering with the Big Y and ShopRite; and encouraging greater participation in the USDA School Breakfast Program. The VITAHLS project will benefit this year from two fall fund-raising events, including a September wine and cheese festival sponsored by the Jones Family Farm, and the Griffin Hospital Gala sponsored by the Griffin Hospital Development Fund, which will be held on November 1st at the Shubert Theater in New Haven. The VITAHLS Working Group continues to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. If you are interested in attending planning meetings of the working group and/or any of its subcommittees, please contact Beth Comerford by email at beth.comerford@yalegriffnprc.org

COMPLETED PROJECT
Advancing School & Community Engagement Now for Disease Prevention (ASCEND) - For the last 3 years, the PRC teamed up with the Independence School District (ISD) in Missouri on a second project funded by the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City. Our first project (2006-2009) involved offering and evaluating the Nutrition Detectives™ (ND) and ABC for Fitness™ (ABC) programs in ISD elementary schools. ND provides “5 clues” to make healthful food choices, and ABC offers 30 minutes of daily classroom-based physical activity. Our second project (2009-2012) tested the effects of expanding our health promotion at a broader level to reach ISD students and their families. We randomly assigned ISD elementary schools to receive either a standard (8 schools) or high-intensity (9 schools) intervention, with 9 schools in the Raytown School District (RSD) serving as a control. The standard intervention offered the ND program for third grade students and ABC program for PreK-5 students. The high-intensity intervention offered ND and ABC in the school setting, along with the following enhancements:

- **School**: family nights to promote healthful eating and activity; nutrition & fitness column in school newsletters; classroom pedometer challenge; healthy snacks and exercise breaks at PTA meetings and open houses; increased opportunities for physical activity in after-school programs
- **Home**: family kits to promote nutrition and physical activity
- **Supermarket**: taste tests, recipes, cost comparisons, and a scavenger hunt for healthful foods

The level of family engagement was impressive and exceeded expectations. Our evaluation found no difference between standard, high-intensity, and control groups with regard to changes in body mass index (BMI). ISD students in both groups improved in all measures of physical fitness, and some of these improvements were higher than those found among RSD students, but a fitness comparison of standard- and high-intensity groups within ISD yielded mixed results. Both levels of intervention appeared to offer some benefits compared to control schools, but little additional benefit seemed to result from the high-intensity vs. the standard intervention. It’s possible that our standard intervention (ND and ABC
programs) led to a certain plateau of improved outcomes that could not have been further improved by offering an enhanced intervention. On the other hand, the true impact of the enhanced intervention may have been underestimated because the amount of available funding limited our selection of evaluation tools, e.g., we lacked funding to compare outcomes in the parents of students in both intervention groups.

The following “lessons” from this project have implications for other school districts across the U.S.:

- **Buy-in from school administrators, teachers, and families is essential.**
- **Districts should be aware of the advance time and logistics required to organize family events.** They need to consider: the need for staff to plan and host the events; potential pitfalls such as poor weather that could hamper attendance and require rescheduling; and the resulting inability to accurately predict the amount of any food to be served. They will need to weigh costs vs. benefits of offering such events and consider proactive ways to address any challenges. E.g., we addressed staffing issues by recruiting high school students and volunteers to serve as ambassadors and teaching assistants for family nights. To save materials development time for this and other districts in the future, we created a template and packets of materials that can be adapted as needed.
- **Outreach to families can reinforce school-based health promotion**, but the best ways to achieve this in a given school or district remain uncertain and likely require a customized approach and the support of other elements in the community, such as clinicians, employers, and faith-based groups.

For more information, contact Judy Treu, PRC Research Associate, at judy.treu@yalegriffinprc.org.

### In the Works

**Recent /Upcoming Grant Submissions**

**RECENTLY SUBMITTED PROPOSALS**

*Community Approaches to Wellness with Special Emphasis on Schools (CAWSES)* – in October, at the request of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we submitted a proposal for a randomized controlled study to determine the effects of the NuVal™ Nutritional Scoring System, alone, and combined with financial incentives to purchase healthful foods, on elementary school students’ diet quality, parents’ nutrition self-efficacy, parents’ food purchasing patterns, parents’ diet quality, and parents’ and students’ body mass index (BMI). If this study is funded, we expect to find that providing nutrition guidance and education will shift these outcomes in a positive direction, and that adding financial incentives to “trade up” nutritionally in all food categories will lead to an even greater shift. Our target population will be low-income families of children enrolled in the Independence School District in Missouri, who face challenges in providing the most nutrients per dollar. The setting for the financial incentives and guidance system will be local Hy-Vee supermarkets in Independence. This will build on our ongoing partnership with the district since 2006 to promote nutrition and physical activity to its students and their families.

### Presentations and Publications

**PRESENTATIONS**

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

- Presentation on September 11th to the New Haven Obstetric & Gynecology Society in New Haven, CT.
- *The Road to Health* on September 19th to the CT Hospital Association in Wallingford.
- *The Road to Health: How to Get there from Here* on September 27th at the 5th Annual Health Forum in Santiago, Chile.
- *The Road to Health: From Less Travelled to Lesser Resistance* on September 29th in Boston at an Annual Coaching in Leadership and Healthcare Conference sponsored by Harvard Medical School.
- *Feet, Forks and the Fate of Our Patients*, Donald A. Berreth Lecture on 10/1/12 to the National Public Health Information Coalition in Washington, DC.
• *Unfattening Our Children* on October 4th at the Cleveland Clinic’s 7th Annual Obesity Summit in Cleveland, OH.
• *Turning the Tide on Childhood Obesity – Being Part of the Solution* on October 10th at the Stone Soup 2012 Collective Action: Parts to Whole Conference in Cromwell, CT.
• Presentation on October 27th at the From Land and Sea: Food for the Good of Connecticut event held in Trumbull, sponsored by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

**Judy Treu, MS, RD, PRC Research Associate**, delivered ABC for Fitness training workshops on September 5th to teachers at Chatfield/LoPresti and Bungay Elementary Schools in the Seymour Public Schools, as part of the VITAHLS initiative.

**PUBLICATIONS**

• Katz DL. *When Children Reject a Healthy Lunch.* The New York Times Opinion Pages. 10/11/12

**In-Service/Training Opportunities**

You are invited to join us at our *Journal Club meetings*, 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.

The next Journal Club meeting will be held at the PRC on the second floor of Griffin Hospital.

• **Tuesday, December 11th from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**

If you have questions or want to receive a PDF version of the article by email, 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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