

News from the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

I am pleased to say that many months of work are clearly paying off. The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (PRC), located in Griffin Hospital, is beginning to engage in important disease prevention and health promotion efforts.

The center is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the nation's premier institution for the prevention of illness. There are a total of 23 prevention research centers in the country. Ours is the only one in Connecticut, and the only one, anywhere, in a hospital. We placed ours in a hospital because our hospital is so unique. Griffin's participation in community-based health care and health promotion is quite exceptional, making it the ideal partner for disease prevention efforts.

The initial focus of our center is cardiovascular disease prevention. We have 4 initial studies, 2 of which are under way. The other 2 are planned to begin in the fall. The first of the 2 active studies is a weight management program for women. The second is a study of cardiac risk factor screening programs, also for women. The 2 studies planned for the fall include an innovative smoking cessation program, and a home-based exercise program for patients with congestive heart failure.

There are unique and challenging aspects to the type of prevention research we're conducting. First, the research needs to be beneficial to all of the participants whenever possible. In other words, we emphasize rigorous scientific methods, but try to avoid the use of a placebo. Everyone who participates in PRC studies should stand a good chance of benefiting personally. The second challenge is to make sure that our work is always closely related to the priorities of our community. In other words, you are the boss!

To make sure we know what the community priorities are, we have a community advisory committee composed of nearly 20 representatives from the Valley. Organizations from schools to clergy to business are represented. The PRC will conduct on-going evaluations of the community health to have objective data about what the important public health issues are in the Valley. But we'll also just listen. We'll listen to our community advisory committee. And we'll listen to you.

On the 21st of May, we'll be having our opening ceremonies. Scientific sessions will be held in the morning for medical personnel and researchers. In

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News from the Yale-
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the afternoon, we'll be holding the prevention research equivalent of a town meeting: a colloquium on community involvement in public health.

Working together, there is little we can't solve; this session will be all about ways we can work together effectively. The keynote speaker of the afternoon session will be the new Commissioner of Health for the State of Connecticut.

You're invited. We are eager to hear from community residents, and eager to tell them about what we're doing. We'll be sending out additional information as the date draws closer, but it's not too soon to tell us you'd like to attend. You can contact the center by calling 732-1AOK (732-1265). The phone will be answered by either Jennifer Franke, the center administrator, or Georgia Jennings, the PRC project manager. Beginning on May 1st, you'll be able to reach us via e-mail at www.yalegriffinprc.org. My colleagues and I would be delighted to hear from you.

Medicine and public health are at their best when they work together. And both work best when they are informed by the views and priorities of the community they intend to serve. We're proud to be your partners in efforts to optimize health in the Valley, and truly look forward to working together

David L. Katz, MD, MPH
Preventive Medicine Column

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