

NUTRI NEWS

Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health

Winter 2014

Hilary Farmer, Editor

Walter Willett Awarded Bloomberg Manulife Prize

McGill University, in association with Lawrence and Frances Bloomberg and Manulife Financial, is pleased to announce that **Dr. Walter C. Willett**, Fredrick John Stare Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition and Chair of the Department of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health, is the winner of



the 2013 Bloomberg Manulife Prize for the Promotion of Active Health. Dr. Willett is the single-most cited nutritionist in the world, and a sought-out expert on the topic of health and nutrition. Known for his strong criticism of policies and guidelines that fail to reflect the best

scientific evidence, Willett has dedicated himself to pursuing research that can inform the public about how proper nutrition contributes to better health, and ultimately, a longer life.

The \$50,000 Bloomberg Manulife Prize, launched in May 2011, is awarded annually to a researcher from anywhere in the world whose work promises to broaden our understanding of how physical activity, nutrition or psychosocial factors influence personal health and wellbeing. Applications for the

IN THIS ISSUE. . .

Lusk Award	2
Meet Kathy Brenner	3
Welcome Newcomers	4
HPFS	6
Meet Alan Flint	7
Planning a Vegan Wedding	9
Chandra Jackson, Yerby Fellow	11

Prize are judged by a jury of distinguished academics from universities and research institutions across North America. The prize was the brainchild of Toronto financier and McGill University alumnus Lawrence S. Bloomberg, C.M., O.Ont., MBA '65, Chair of the Board of Directors of BloombergSen Inc. and a Director of the National Bank of Canada.

"The Bloomberg Manulife Prize was created to raise the profile of health research that has the power to make a transformative difference to public health, and on how people approach their health and wellbeing," explains Mr. Bloomberg. "Dr. Willett's exceptional career epitomizes the

(next page)

Department Members Contributing to This Issue:

Alyssa Aftosmes-Tobio, Kathy Brenner, Patrice Brown, Jo Charles,
Alan Flint, Debbie Flynn, Kim Hesse, Frank Hu, Chandra Jackson,
Matthew Lopes, Anne Lusk, Catherine Roy

I especially want to thank Barbara Vericker for the graphics and layout of NutriNews.

intersection of strong research with a powerful public message, and I could not be happier with his selection as this year's Prizewinner."

"Dr. Willett is a thought leader in his industry, performing forward-thinking work that influences healthy lifestyles," says Nicole Boivin, Chief Brand and Communications Officer at Manulife Financial. "His work aligns with our long history of supporting causes that improve overall health and wellbeing, and we are proud to recognize him with this award."

Dr. Willett accepted the prize at a special ceremony in Toronto on Monday, January 27, 2014.

[This news release was excerpted from <http://www.mcgill.ca/channels/news/mcgill-announces-winner-bloomberg-manulife-prize-232358>]

* * *

ANNE LUSK RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Dr. Anne Lusk, Research Scientist, recently was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) in Boulder, CO. The purpose of the APBP is to increase the influence of the pedestrian and bicycle profession by facilitating the exchange of professional and technical knowledge, elevating practitioners' skills, and defining the field. The organization now has 1,200 members in the United States and Canada who work at all levels of government, in manufacturing, and as consultants, advocates, researchers, and students in a wide range of disciplines (such as transportation planning and engineering, urban design, landscape architecture, public health, active living, and Safe Routes to School). The APBP offers the technical training and resources necessary to build capacity

for sustainable transportation, including a monthly webinar series, the biennial Professional Development Seminar, Complete Streets and pedestrian accessibility workshops, and publishes the respected *Bicycle Parking Guidelines, 2nd Edition*.

Dr. Lusk has been recognized for drawing attention to design changes that cause women, seniors, and children to feel more comfortable on bikes. Her work to make bicycling safer and more attractive spans 32 years. In addition to this award, Dr. Lusk's many other accomplishments include having created the Stowe Recreation Path (Vermont 1981); having helped found and chair Vermont Trails and Greenways Council; and having helped to found the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition. Dr. Lusk has also served as Vice Chair of American Trails. She received a prestigious NIH 4-year grant to study bicycle facilities, has taught classes on bicycle facilities at Harvard School of Public Health and Harvard University Extension School, and has published articles including "Bicycle Guidelines and Crash Rates on Cycle Tracks in the United States" in the 2013 *American Journal of Public Health*. APBP salutes Anne Lusk as a researcher, worldwide lecturer and career mentor.

(For more information, please go to the following website: <http://www.apbp.org/news/138932/>) **

MEET OUR WRITING CONSULTANT, KATHY BRENNER

by Hilary Farmer

Since the Harvard School of Public Health ranks right at the top of public health institutions, it naturally attracts top students and researchers from all over the world. In fact, a majority of the doctoral students, postdocs and visiting scholars in our Nutrition Department hail from foreign countries, and many of them are non-native English speakers. However, because their doctoral dissertations and other research results will be published in top-tier journals, quite a few of these students and postdocs find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when they try to write their research articles in English. Thus, there has grown a strong demand for some form of writing assistance!

To address this need, the Department hired Kathy Brenner as an independent contractor/writing consultant in 2001 to tutor our students and postdocs in writing manuscripts in the biomedical sciences for journal publication. Although HSPH does conduct writing courses taught by Donald Halstead, Instructor, Kathy is unique in that she has a writing expertise with speakers of other languages; her writing sessions are private, where she works with each student on a one-on-one basis. The pair works from a custom-designed syllabus and a specific vehicle, such as a manuscript that the student would like to see published. Most, but not all, of Kathy's students are non-native English speakers, and most are postdocs, visiting scholars and doctoral students.

Typically, Kathy will work with a student for 2-6 months, depending upon the student's language competency. In addition to helping them build

their academic writing skills, Kathy will also work with her students to develop their oral competency and presentation skills. For example, she will ask a student to present a new article every week in order to help him/her build their language competence. When I asked Kathy about her students, she replied that each case is very different—and all of her students are special to her! Kathy finds it highly rewarding to watch them as each makes progress. In fact, when Kathy sees their English competency progress over time—along with their ability to dissect sentences and think more analytically—this to her demonstrates a level of sophistication that they did not possess in the beginning.



In addition to her one-on-one sessions in the Nutrition Department, Kathy also teaches in other departments at HSPH. She conducts writing seminars and workshops both here and in collaboration with Jim Gould, Director of the Office for Postdoctoral Programs and Services at Harvard Medical School. She also tutors students at the Harvard Dental School.

Furthermore, she teaches at Boston University/Center for English Language and Orientation Programs where she prepares international students to take on the rigors of an undergraduate or graduate education in the United States. Besides teaching others, Kathy is engaged in teaching with technology and also speaks at major conferences, such as the annual TESOL conference which attracts between 5,000-8,000 attendees. Thus, Kathy is no stranger to public speaking herself! On top of all of this, Kathy is engaged in her own research and will have her manuscript on technology in education published shortly.

(next page)

Interested to learn how Kathy became a writing consultant, I discovered that she received her bachelor's degree in printmaking and the fine arts, after which she received her MAT degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. After 17 years in marketing and corporate sales, Kathy became a research associate in oriental antiquities at the British Museum in London where she specialized in Japanese art from the Edo period. Kathy has lived abroad in other countries as well, including China, Hong Kong, Indonesia and South Korea—so she feels very much at ease with her Asian students and helps them with cultural adjustment. Because she herself has lived in some of her students' countries, she is able to understand their ways. She notes that she, too, has experienced trouble with “cultural adjustment” when she came back to live in the US. In fact, Kathy now calls Asia her “second home”. She did stress, however, that she never lets her students know which languages she is able to speak besides English!

When asked how she spends her free time, Kathy told me that she's an “obsessed lap swimmer” and swims religiously 5-7 days/week. In fact, Kathy claims she simply “can't function” without water. Indeed, swimming to Kathy is almost a form of mindfulness and meditation and helps her to think better. Water has such a strong influence on Kathy that when she swims, she finds herself at times very focused on creating new pedagogical scenarios for the classroom.

Finally, Kathy's work here has expanded very nicely over the years and she absolutely loves what she does! She has a great passion for her “classroom” here because it's made up of so many interesting cultures. Kathy emphasizes how much she enjoys the Nutrition Department because it is full of great people and cutting-edge research. And with the serious global spread of diabetes and obesity, this is the place to be. To illustrate how much our Department has really influenced her life, Kathy confessed that whenever she eats a certain food, she is “haunted by Dr. Willett” because in her mind there is this mental voice that is telling her how Dr. Willett would or would not approve of what she's eating. That's how much of a mental presence he's created for her!

NEWCOMERS TO THE NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

The following people have recently joined our department. Let's all welcome them to Nutrition now!

NEW POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Sarah Aroner (Mentor: Majken Jensen)

Kjetil Lauvland Bjornevik (Mentor: Alberto Ascherio)

Marianna Cortese (Mentor: Alberto Ascherio)

Kerry Ivey (Mentor: Eric Rimm)

Jun Li (Mentor: Frank Hu)

Fernanda Michels (Mentor: Edward Giovannucci)

Mercedes Sotos Prieto (Mentor: Josiemer Mattei)

Sinara Rossato (Mentor: Walter Willett)

David St. Jules (Mentor: Majken Jensen)

Maya Vadiveloo (Mentor: Josiemer Mattei)

Meng Yeng (Mentor: Jorge Chavarro)

Yan Zheng (Mentor: Lu Qi)

NEW VISITING SCIENTISTS

Enrica Dessi (Mentor: Alberto Ascherio)

Lars Erik (Mentor: Majken Jensen)

Xiuhua Shen (Mentor: Xiang Gao)

Nicola Veronese (Mentor: Frank Hu)

NEW FACULTY MEMBERS

The following faculty members have recently been appointed or reappointed to the Department of Nutrition:

Clement Adebamowo, ScD

Adjunct Associate Professor of Nutrition

Ross A. Hammond, PhD

Adjunct Associate Professor of Nutrition

Ana Lindsay, DrPH

Adjunct Associate Professor of Nutrition

NEW STAFF

Jo Charles is originally from Boston, and graduated from Northeastern University with a major in Economics and a minor in History and Law, Policy, and Society (LPS). Jo works with **Dr. Kirsten Davison**, along with her team, as a research assistant and primarily provides support for the recruitment, data collection, and analysis for the Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Project (CORD). He is also involved in another project that looks at the role that Fathers play in childhood obesity prevention.



Before accepting a permanent position here, Jo worked as a temporary research assistant for a plate waste study run by Project Bread and the Harvard School of Public Health (under the direction of **Dr. Juliana Cohen**), which sought to analyze the efficacy of a school lunch intervention. Jo enjoys a variety of interests in his free time, including fitness, food, photography, travel, and music.

Matthew Lopes has just joined the Fatty Acid Analysis team in the lab of **Dr. Hannia Campos** as a Research Assistant. His work will be centered on extracting fatty acids from specimen samples and doing preliminary data analysis on the fatty acid content of those samples.



Matthew attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 2011 with a BA in Biochemistry

and in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, with a concentration in Japanese. His main hobbies include studying foreign languages, playing bass guitar, and playing Go. Since graduation, Matthew has explored his interests in foreign languages and in healthcare services through various employment opportunities, such as performing freelance work as a Japanese translator and working as a pharmacy technician. Eager to pursue a career in scientific research, Matthew is excited to be a part of the Department of Nutrition!

Catherine Roy began working in the Nutrition Department at the beginning of January as a research assistant in **Dr. Hannia Campos'** lab, where she works with both **Dr. Jeremy Furtado** and **Jorind Beqari**. Their main project focuses on extracting fatty acids from blood samples. Catherine graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in May 2013 with a degree in Chemistry. She has spent this past fall taking prerequisite classes for graduate school as she eventually hopes to get her master's degree in Nutrition.



Welcome!

THE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOLLOW-UP STUDY IS KEY TO NUTRITION DEPARTMENT'S RESEARCH

by Hilary Farmer

Most of the research in the HSPH Department of Nutrition revolves around data obtained from its large prospective cohort studies, such as the Health Professionals Follow-up Study and Nurses' Health Studies.

The HPFS is the largest and most detailed long-term study of male health professionals today. It was founded by *Dr. Walter Willett* and colleagues in 1986 to evaluate those hypotheses that related nutritional factors to incidence of cancer, heart disease, and other vascular diseases. The all-male study, sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health and funded by the National Cancer Institute, was designed to complement the all-female Nurses' Health Study.

The investigators originally enlisted 51,529 men, 40-70 years of age, in various health professions, including 29,683 dentists, 4,185 pharmacists, 3,745 optometrists, 2,220 osteopath physicians, 1,600 podiatrists, and 10,098 veterinarians. Physicians were not included because a separate physician cohort had already been established as the Physicians' Health Study. Of these HPFS participants, 531 are African-American and 877 are Asian-American.

Every two years study participants receive a questionnaire containing disease and health-related questions about their smoking habits, physical activity level, and medications taken. Additional questionnaires seeking detailed dietary information are administered every 4 years. Since its inception, over 850 research articles directly based on HPFS findings have been published by our scientists.

The HPFS is very important to our research here because its long-term follow-up of the participants since 1986 has provided key information on cancer survival together with dietary and other data, both before and after diagnosis, and now provides a sufficient number of subsequent deaths for various analyses. This cohort is presently in a maximally informative phase because its younger members are only just now entering the age of substantial cancer risk. Thus, we are able to examine incident cancers with a realistic latency period (such as lung cancer from smoking, which is >30 years, and colorectal cancer risk).

The HPFS does not stand alone; it also serves as a data resource for 54 other currently funded grants, which draw upon the exposure information collected from the questionnaire and from our biological specimen banks. Other health outcomes in addition to cancer are also examined, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, glaucoma/macular degeneration, dental diseases, kidney stones, pneumonia, Parkinson's disease, ALS, and multiple sclerosis.

For more history, sample questionnaires, and lists of publications, check out the HPFS website at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpfs/>

MEET ALAN FLINT

RESEARCH SCIENTIST AND PROJECT DIRECTOR OF HPFS

by Hilary Farmer

Dr. Alan Flint, Research Scientist, is the Project Director of the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, which is under the overall direction of *Dr. Walter Willett, PI*. Dr. Flint is charged with overseeing this large cohort study's day-to-day operations. In his role as Project Director, Dr. Flint participates in grant writing and budget management, personnel issues, and various supervisory responsibilities. He also serves as liaison with the NIH, and he collaborates and consults with other researchers—among other duties.

Because so many other people from the Nutrition Department and other institutions are involved in HPFS, Dr. Flint is understandably very busy in this highly active role. For example, many faculty members, postdocs, students and outside collaborators draw upon information derived from the HPFS questionnaires and biorepositories, and interface with Dr. Flint. He does not work alone, however. There is one very capable manager under Dr. Flint, *Betsy Frost-Hawes*, as well as a number of equally capable dietitians, programmers and research

assistants, mostly based at the Landmark Center. The study also employs part-time college students, mostly during the summer, who engage in the necessary tasks such as scanning questionnaires.

Curious to learn more about the study, I asked Dr. Flint to tell me a little bit about the HPFS. I was informed that HPFS participants receive

a questionnaire every 2 years—and Dr. Flint emphasized how extremely impressed he was by the long-term loyalty and commitment of the study participants! For example, their response rate is extremely high: 94-95%. Although the HPFS has always focused primarily on cancers, there are many other endpoints as well, such as cardiovascular disease, neurological diseases, gastrointestinal problems, diabetes, gout, hearing loss and kidney stones. Data on these different diseases have been generated by all of HPFS's ancillary grants. In fact, the cohort study is in a

remarkable information stage now because so many of the younger participants enrolled in the study have begun at this stage in their lives to develop cancers. Also, to date, over a



Alan and Nathanial, one of his sons.

third of the original participants have died at this point; consequently, excellent records have been obtained by our disease and death follow-up groups working at the Landmark Center. Dr. Flint also reminded me that we have a highly important tissue block collection for the different cancers, which is a wonderful resource for certain of our analyses. Not only researchers work with HPFS data; programmers are also employed by the study and *Laura Sampson's* group of dietitians analyze the diet records.

I then asked Dr. Flint to tell us a little bit about himself, and learned that he is involved with other cohorts in addition to the HPFS, and these include the Nurses' Health Studies and the GUTS Studies. His own research focuses primarily on nutrition, heart disease, hypertension, obesity, and food addiction. Dr. Flint recently conducted analyses using a scale designed to mark various symptoms of food addiction, such as tolerance, withdrawal, and cravings, which is administered through a questionnaire. When asked how he came to the HSPH, Dr. Flint told me that he received his MD from the University of Pittsburgh, with a specialty in pediatric cardiology. His earlier work began in clinical practice where he was a faculty member at University of Massachusetts Medical School/Worcester for 5 years. This work eventually led to research with a more public health-focused role, so

Alan came to HPSH to earn his DrPH in nutrition and epidemiology. And medicine truly runs in his family! Alan's wife also has an MD, and she is a pediatric anesthesiologist who specializes in pain management at Children's Hospital.

Originally from New Hampshire, Alan greatly enjoys hiking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, and music. When I asked him about his musical interests, I learned that he plays guitar and piano, and likes to sing. His musical tastes run from the Beatles to opera, and he is currently on the board of directors of the Boston Opera Collaborative—which he greatly enjoys! The Flints have 3 boys: 5-yr old twins and a 9-yr old, whom they take swimming, canoeing, and to the opera and other music concerts. The twins have just started school in the Brookline school system, and Alan remarks that it's great to finally have all his boys in one place!

Naturally, the inevitable question arose: Does Alan like to cook? Although he says he "isn't strong on cooking", he does like to make big breakfasts for the kids and does a lot of grilling. He and his wife top off their meals by sipping on a nice cold beer that Alan has brewed himself with his own home-grown hops!



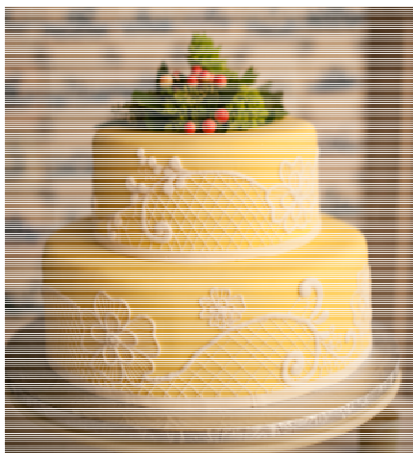
A VEGAN'S GUIDE TO WEDDING PLANNING

by Alyssa Aftosmes-Tobio

*Planning a wedding can be a wonderful, albeit stressful, affair. This may be especially true for those trying to plan an entirely vegan reception. It might not be easy, for example, to mitigate your family's expectation that there will be a main course of filet mignon, or to find a local caterer who is versed in veganism. For these reasons, **Alyssa Aftosmes-Tobio** shares the wisdom she gained from planning her own wedding, and offers a few tips for those of you who may be considering a vegan wedding of your own.*

Ahh, the joys of wedding planning. For me, this involved countless hours combing over the minutiae in an attempt to craft the perfect evening. When planning such a large-scale event, anyone concerned with their impact on the environment has an added layer of consideration and, sometimes, complication. Quite often, the most affordable options are not the most earth-friendly, nor are they synonymous with fair and ethical labor and production practices.

Veganism is not monolithic, so I can only speak to my own experiences and ideas, but broadly speaking, being vegan is much more than a list of dietary "restrictions". It is about molding every facet of one's life around the idea that we should not participate in practices that exploit or cause suffering/death to animals, particularly in the name of consumption. For me, being vegan is a daily act of peace. It seemed fitting, appropriate, and necessary that this life I have chosen should be reflected in the most precious and joyous event in my life to-date.



**Chocolate cake with
raspberry buttercream filling**

Although my husband is not vegan, there was never a question in his mind about whether or not our wedding would be vegan. As he put it, "you should be able to eat everything at your own wedding, and not just as the 'optional' meal". What was important to me was that I could stand behind every purchase I made on behalf of our guests. We chose our venue for the setting and atmosphere, and were fully prepared to negotiate hiring an outside caterer because they did not advertise any vegan options on their website. At the first meeting with our coordinator, much to our surprise, they didn't miss a beat when I told them that all the food needed to be vegan. We only had to hire an outside bakery.

Since not all beer and wine are vegan, we also needed to carefully coordinate with our beverage provider. There are

ingredients used in the production of some beers and wines which make them unsuitable for vegans to consume. Isinglass, which is a product made from fish bladder, is a “fining agent” used by some companies in the filtration process (for example, Guinness®). There are also styles of beer that add honey during the brewing process for flavor.

My advice? Take a deep breath – it can be done with some planning. For anyone researching caterers to execute a completely vegan event, be upfront and specific at the outset, and don’t shy away from bringing your own suggestions and creativity to the table. I found it helpful to list out the stages our evening would progress through, and then assess what food/drink was needed at each point. Also, if you ask a bakery if they ever make vegan cakes, and they respond with a blank stare, it might be a good idea to consider other options.



Grilled Polenta with cauliflower mash, red kale and mushroom ragu

Alyssa & Bob’s Vegan Wedding Menu

Venue: Willowdale Estate (<http://willowdaleestate.com/Home.cfm>)

- Appetizers:
 - Mediterranean station
 - Steamed vegetable dumplings with dipping sauce
 - Heirloom tomato and basil bruschetta
 - Stuffed grape leaves (golden raisins, pine nuts and herbs)
- Dinner:
 - Simple greens with Lemon Mint vinaigrette
 - Grilled Polenta with Cauliflower mash, red kale and mushroom ragu
- Desserts:
 - Cake (Bean Counter Bakery: <http://beancounterbakery.com/>): chocolate cake with raspberry buttercream filling
 - Cookies: Chocolate Chip and Chocolate Chip Walnut
- Late night snack:
 - French fries served with homemade ketchup
- Drinks
 - Hot apple cider
 - Beer: Bud Light, Blue Moon, Sam Adams Light, Harpoon UFO Pumpkin
 - Liquor: Absolut, Captain Morgan, Tanqueray, Jack Daniels, Makers Mark, Dewar’s, Kahlua, St. Germaine
 - Mixers: Fair trade, locally-made soda (Maine Root: <http://maineroot.com/>) cola, root beer, lemon lime, pumpkin pie

Alyssa Aftosmes-Tobio is the Program Coordinator for the Public Health Nutrition Program and works with Drs. Kirsten Davison, Stephanie Smith-Warner, Majken Jensen, and Josiemer Mattei.

MEET CHANDRA JACKSON CURRENT YERBY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

Chandra L. Jackson, PhD, MS has recently joined our department as a Yerby Fellow in Nutrition, and she will contribute to several areas of research in our Department. Dr. Jackson is from Atlanta, Georgia, and earned a Master's degree in Epidemiology from HSPH in 2007, and a PhD in Epidemiology from The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2012 as a C. Sylvia and Eddie C. Brown Scholar in Community Health. She has Certificates in both Health Disparities and Health Inequalities as well as in Community-based Public Health. A former White House Intern during the Obama administration working in both the National Economic and Domestic Policy Councils, Dr. Jackson is interested in translating epidemiologic evidence into policies that address social determinants of health and health disparities. Dr. Jackson's research primarily focuses on the epidemiology, prevention and control of obesity and type 2 diabetes. She has received merit-based awards at both Johns Hopkins and Harvard, including the Charlotte Silverman Award for outstanding commitment to public health, policy, and community outreach, as well as the Novartis Institutes Biomedical Research Postdoctoral Award. We've asked Dr. Jackson to answer a few questions so we could all learn more about her work and herself. But first, let's take a minute to welcome her to the Department of Nutrition!



The Yerby Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the Harvard School of Public Health was created with the goal of expanding the diversity of people entering academic public health. It was named for *Dr. Alonzo Smythe Yerby*, who was an African-American pioneer in public health. The program was designed to bridge the academic training of its fellows in health-related disciplines with entry into faculty positions at U.S. institutions. Yerby fellows are meant to advance their intellectual and professional development under the guidance of a senior faculty member with compatible interests. Under this guidance, Yerby fellows develop their own research agendas, participate in a variety of professional development workshops, acquire experience in obtaining grant support and publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, and increase their communication and presentation skills. Fellowship training is available at one of HSPH's nine academic departments in either the laboratory sciences, population sciences, or social and policy sciences. The Yerby Program is highly competitive, and candidates are expected to already possess established research interests and a doctoral degree in a public health-related discipline.

Editor: Dr. Jackson, could you please describe your current research on the epidemiology, prevention, and control of obesity and type 2 diabetes?

Dr. Jackson: *Sure. My main research area focuses on the role of suboptimal diet and lifestyle (mainly related to sleep) as major modifiable contributors to the disproportionate obesity and diabetes risk experienced by traditionally under-resourced populations. I have published on the importance of maintaining a healthy body weight even in the absence of metabolic abnormalities like high blood pressure. I have also published on the consumption of nuts and their impact on body*

weight, the so-called obesity paradox, potential Black-White differences in obesity-related mortality as well as noteworthy differences in overweight/obesity trends within levels of educational attainment. In one of our sleep disparities studies, we recently revealed socially patterned Black-White disparities in short sleep—associated with obesity, diabetes, occupational injuries, loss in work-related productivity, and premature mortality—by industry of employment and occupation in the US. We found short sleep generally increased with increasing professional responsibility within a given industry among blacks but decreased with increasing professional

roles among whites, which has revealed a new, important area for future research. In fact, we recently received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a pilot study to extend our findings.

Editor: How do you plan to translate your epidemiologic findings into interventions and policies that address the health disparities experienced by traditionally under-resourced populations?

Dr. Jackson: *I plan to conduct research that informs and is informed by the needs of policymakers charged with addressing health and social inequities by focusing on modifiable, social determinants of both obesity and its public, as well as policy-relevant, health consequences. I hope to eventually investigate the efficacy and effectiveness of diet and lifestyle interventions across various settings (e.g. home, school, workplace) that are designed to address health disparities while considering their cost-effectiveness. I also hope to serve on various committees where policies likely to influence health disparities are created, implemented and/or evaluated.*

Editor: Who are your mentors here, and how are you working with them to achieve these goals?

Dr. Jackson: *I work directly with Dr. Frank Hu in the Nutrition Department and Dr. Ichiro Kawachi, who is the Chair of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department. They both serve as tremendous resources in terms of scientific knowledge and career advice, and are helping me prepare for a career as an independent public health researcher. We have regular meetings where we discuss my research projects as well as short- and long-term career goals. In addition to providing networking and professional development opportunities, they offer advice on drafts of scientific manuscripts and various presentations. For instance, Dr. Hu has invited me to spearhead or be a coauthor on manuscripts, and has recently connected me with his colleague to present my research at the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health.*

Editor: How did you first become interested in nutritional/epidemiological research?

Dr. Jackson: *My interest and passion for improving social issues that negatively affect health through policy, systems, and environmental perspectives stem from several personal experiences. For instance, I have a number of family members with type 2 diabetes in rural and urban areas of Georgia, and have witnessed incredible differences in the quality of their diabetes care and treatment. I discovered public health and epidemiology as a summer intern at Johns Hopkins while searching for career opportunities to address the preventable social inequities I witnessed, and ultimately considered epidemiology to be an effective tool to help protect and improve the public's health while addressing health inequities.*

Editor: How does the Yerby Fellowship fit into your goals?

Dr. Jackson: *I hope to obtain a faculty position focused on investigating diet and lifestyle factors as contributors to racial/ethnic and socioeconomic health disparities. The Yerby fellowship fits nicely into my career goals as the fellowship program is designed to serve as a bridge between formal PhD training and a career in academic public health.*

Editor: Where did you study and work before you came here, and what kinds of things did you do?

Dr. Jackson: *Before becoming a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Nutrition Department at the Harvard School of Public Health, I was a PhD student in Epidemiology and a trainee in the Welch Center for Prevention, Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. I was an inaugural recipient of the Bloomberg School of Public Health's coveted C. Sylvia and Eddie C. Brown Scholarship in Community Health, and engaged in several short-term policy-related internships as extracurricular activities during the PhD program because of my interests in translating public health evidence into policies and practices that address health disparities.*

Editor: What do you do in your spare time when you're not here doing your research?

Dr. Jackson: One of my greatest passions is international travel, which has led me to visit many parts of the world. When not planning my latest excursion, I also enjoy going to paint night events around Boston with the last one located in Watertown. I also like to attend church, volunteer, go dancing as one alternative to the gym, dine at restaurants with friends, and read motivational or non-fiction books.

Editor: What is your favorite type of food or dish, and do you yourself enjoy cooking?

Dr. Jackson: I really enjoy Thai cuisine, but have not attempted to make dishes myself as I tend to be a minimalist when it comes to cooking ingredients. I, however, do enjoy cooking healthier versions of Southern food.

Editor: What do you consider your greatest success?

Dr. Jackson: Although I am incredibly humbled

to be the first person in my family to earn a PhD and to have had professional experiences like serving as a White House Intern focused on public health matters, I consider working with world leaders in public health like Dr. Frank Hu and other faculty in the department as my greatest success. Under his mentorship, I have been given incredible opportunities to thrive and grow as a researcher. It has been an honor to work with him, and have some of my postdoctoral research featured in major news outlets like US News & World Report, USA Today, Scientific American, and CBS News.

Editor: What advice do you have for aspiring nutritional epidemiologists?

Dr. Jackson: I advise them to find their passion within the field and relentlessly pursue it as a career. I also recommend that they focus on developing strong skills and competence in their core area of research before focusing on developing a niche as a strong understanding of the fundamentals is irreplaceable.

**Email Hilary Farmer (hfarmer@hsph.harvard.edu)
with any comments, corrections, or suggestions for future issues.**