

# NUTRI NEWS

## The Department of Nutrition

July, 2022

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### DAWN DECOSTA JOINS DEPARTMENT AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MINDFULNESS CENTER



**Ms Dawn DeCosta** has been appointed as Executive Director for the Department of Nutrition's newly formed Mindfulness Center. This new Center will conduct rigorous investigation of the potential role of mindfulness in addressing serious challenges to public health and well-being globally. She will work closely with **Dr Walter Willett** in his role as Center Faculty Director along with Department Chair, **Dr Frank Hu**, and Director of Mindfulness Research and Practice in the Department of Nutrition, **Dr Lilian Cheung**.

In her new role as Executive Director, Dawn is the strategic partner to the faculty Center Director, providing thought leadership and broad high-level management support focused on mindfulness and public health. She is responsible for advising and overseeing all day-to-day operations of the Center. She will be responsible for aligning the Center's resources and energies with its mission, working with the Center leadership on setting

programmatic long-range and strategic priorities and fostering partnerships across the University and beyond.

For the past twenty-one years, Dawn served as Director of Research Operations at Harvard School of Dental Medicine. She has also held roles at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Forsyth Institute. In her free time Dawn enjoys painting [www.dawndecosta.com](http://www.dawndecosta.com), gardening, French bulldogs, and kayaking. Dawn's spouse is a Montessori teacher in Scituate and they have a teenager who attends Saint Andrew's School in Delaware. Dawn is looking forward to working closely with the Harvard Chan community and beyond. Please take a moment to say "hello" to her when you see her and to welcome her to our Department!

## NEWS IN THE DEPARTMENT

### HONORS AND AWARDS

**Kenny Mendoza-Herrera**, PhD student, won first place in the American Society for Nutrition Young Minority Investigator Oral Competition organized by the ASN Minority and Diversity Affairs Committee. He presented his work on "Association Between Parental Feeding Styles and Excess Weight, and Its Mediation by Diet in Costa Rican Adolescents".

**Dr Mingyang Song**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and Nutrition, was recently appointed as the Statistics Associate Editor of *Gut* for a period of 3 years, starting from July 11, 2022. The appointment is renewable by mutual consent. *Gut* is an internationally leading journal of digestive disease and nutrition. The current impact factor of 31.8 is among the highest ranked journals in the gastroenterology/hepatology field. The Associate Editor's responsibility includes handling manuscripts, attracting high quality work to the journal, and helping disseminate the latest advances in the scientific community.

**Josiemer Mattei, PhD, MPH**, Donald and Sue Pritzker Associate Professor of Nutrition, was elected to serve as 2022-23 co-chair of the Faculty Council. This is a great leadership and service opportunity for Dr Mattei, as well as being an excellent opportunity to highlight Department priorities at the School level.

### GRANTS

**Dr Daniel Wang**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition, has a newly funded R01 grant from the National Institute on Aging, NIH. This is a 5-year grant titled "Towards Precision Nutrition for Alzheimer's Dementia Prevention: A Prospective Study of Dietary Patterns, the Gut Microbiome and Cognitive Function." Daniel and his team will examine the role of the Microbiome-Gut-Brain Axis in the benefits of two healthy dietary patterns, the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet, for preventing cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's Dementia in four prospective studies, including the Nurses' Health Study II, MIND Study, ASPREE-XT Study, and Study of Latinos. This project will start to develop microbiome-guided precision dietary strategies for Alzheimer's Dementia prevention. **Dr Meir Stampfer**, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition at HSPH, and **Dr Vincent Carey**, Professor of Medicine at HMS, will serve as co-Investigators.

**Dr Mingyang Song**, Assistant Professor in the Departments of Epidemiology and Nutrition, received a 5-year R01 grant from the National Institute of Cancer, NIH titled "Coffee and metabolites modulating the gut microbiome for improved colorectal cancer survival." In this grant, Mingyang and colleagues from MGH and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute will conduct a randomized controlled trial of coffee intake and a prospective biobanking study in colon cancer patients to determine the effect of coffee consumption on fatty liver, the gut microbiome and metabolome, and markers of cancer recurrence. This project may identify beneficial components in coffee as adjuvant therapeutics for colon cancer. **Dr Edward Giovannucci**, Professor of

Nutrition and Epidemiology, and **Dr Rob van Dam**, Adjunct Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, will serve as a co-investigator and consultant, respectively.

## PUBLICATIONS

**Simone Passarelli, MS, PhD**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, and colleagues published the following paper. Passarelli states their findings are important because "For many nutrition researchers, our analyses begin with dietary datasets. But as we know, there are enormous gaps in the availability of high-quality food consumption data. As a result, many researchers must rely on less-than-ideal measures, like food supply data, single-day recalls, or indices, which can obscure our results and conclusions. In our [recent paper in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#), my co-first author **Chris Free** and I attempted to address this challenge by consolidating dietary data on people's usual nutrient intake in 31 countries, estimating what intake distributions look like for different age and sex groups, and making these distributions publicly available for nutrition researchers (I also recommend checking out a [great editorial](#) by Jessica Fanzo accompanying the paper)."

Simone Passarelli, Christopher M Free, Lindsay H Allen, Carolina Batis, Ty Beal, Anja Pia Biloft-Jensen, Sabri Bromage, Ling Cao, Analí Castellanos-Gutiérrez, Tue Christensen, Sandra P Crispim, Arnold Dekkers, Karin De Ridder, Selma Kronsteiner-Gicevic, Christopher Lee, Yanping Li, Mourad Moursi, Isabelle Moyersoen, Josef Schmidhuber, Alon Shepon, Daniel F Viana, Christopher D Golden 2022). Estimating national and subnational nutrient intake distributions of global diets. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

## PRESENTATIONS

**Drs Kazuko Yoshizawa, Laila Al-Shaar**, and **Walter Willett** presented their results part from an ongoing FFQ validation study for a Japanese population at **NUTRITION 2022, American Society of Nutrition**, on June 14, 2022. Their presentation was titled "Reproducibility and validity of a food frequency questionnaire to measure the consumption of  $\beta$ -carotene,  $\beta$ -cryptoxanthin, folate, vitamin D, EPA, and DHA".

## NEW FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

**Christina Dieli-Conwright, PhD** has been appointed (Secondary) Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition. Dr Dieli-Conwright will be course developer and primary instructor for *NUT 218: Exercise as Medicine for the Prevention and Management of Chronic Diseases*, a 2.5-credit course to be taught in Fall 2, 2022.

Exercise is a potent non-pharmacologic lifestyle modality that positively alters chronic disease risk and management of chronic disease throughout the lifespan, and as such the phrase "Exercise as Medicine" is commonly used to underscore the importance of this modality in everyday life. Epidemiologic research supports the use of physical activity in support of exercise as medicine to address disease risk and management which has been further reinforced with efficacy data from clinical exercise trials. The breadth of this work lends to challenges in developing and implementing rigorously prescribed exercise across individuals and populations. This course will help students develop a framework for assessing and designing exercise strategies to reduce the burden of disease. This course will be an important addition to our curriculum. Dr Dieli-Conwright hopes to make significant contributions to our department's mission through scientific endeavors conducted in her research laboratory at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and her passion for mentoring.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Cuilin Zhang, MD, PhD** has been appointed Adjunct Professor of Nutrition. Dr Zhang's recent research focuses on nutrition and lifestyle, metabolic and genetic determinants, and health consequences of obesity,

gestational diabetes and type 2 diabetes, and developmental origins of cardio-metabolic diseases. This work will serve to further enhance our Department's mission.

While she was a Senior Investigator with tenure and the interim Chief in the Epidemiology Branch, Division of Population Health Research, NICHD, National Institutes of Health, Dr Zhang initiated and led multiple large cohort studies supported by the National Institutes of Health (>US \$60 million as PI or Co-PI). Along with extensive epidemiological and clinical data as well as related biospecimen collections, these studies were well-designed for investigating a broad range of health and disease outcomes and early life precursors of perinatal, paediatric, and adult diseases. This data could become a major resource for interested students and postdocs in our departments.

Dr Zhang is currently a full professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and the founding Director of the Global Center for Asian Women's Health, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore and is leading multiple initiatives for advancing Asian women's Health by promoting healthy diet and lifestyle. These efforts will serve to further enhance our Department's mission on global health.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**Simone Passarelli, MS, PhD**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, will be leaving our Department after six years to join the State Department as an AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow in their office of Global Food Security.



Simone was a PhD student here for four years, then became a Postdoctoral Research Fellow for two more years. She worked under the mentorship of **Dr Chris Golden** researching new methods to estimate global micronutrient intake distributions. Some other research projects that she worked on included estimating the nutritional impacts of aquatic foods, interventions to address child stunting in rural Ethiopia, and nutritional assessment from a national survey in Kiribati.

Dr Passarelli has now been accepted as a AAAS (American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences) Science and Technology Policy Fellow, which is a 1-2 year fellowship program that places scientists in federal government positions. She will be doing her fellowship in the State Department, in the Office of Global Food Security, working on issues of international food security policy and diplomacy.

When asked to comment on her stay here, she stated: "I'm so grateful for all of my time in the department and all of the wonderful people I've worked with along the way, learned from, and taught. I have such fond memories of our retreats, seminars, picnics, holiday parties, and my classes. I'm thankful for the many mentors I've been lucky to have as collaborators, professors and on my dissertation committee. I'm excited to take all of the knowledge I've gained from my coursework and research into the world of international food policy. Please make sure to stay in touch! You can always reach me at [simoneapassarelli@gmail.com](mailto:simoneapassarelli@gmail.com). I look forward to coming back to visit the department. Please get in touch if you find yourself in the DC area-- I'd always love to grab coffee/lunch/drinks!"

## MONDAY NUTRITION SEMINARS

The Department of Nutrition holds its weekly **Monday Nutrition Seminar Series** every Monday throughout the academic year. The talks are varied, but they highlight the many different aspects of cutting-edge research that is currently being conducted in the fields of nutrition and global public health. These seminars are held from **1:00-1:50 pm** and are free and open to the public. Because of COVID-19, most of the seminars have been presented via Zoom since March of 2020. Beginning this fall, our seminars will be in more of a hybrid mix, with some in-person and others still virtual. The in-person seminars will also be on Zoom for those unable to attend. During the fall semester, live seminars will be held in FXB G-13. Live spring semesters will be in Kresge 502, as they were in past years. A zoom link for viewing will be available one week prior to each seminar.

**Our first Monday Nutrition Seminar presentation will be on August 29, 2022.**

**Aug 29**     **Dr Sabri Bromage**, Fogarty Global Health Fellow – "International collaborations to develop, operationalize, and scale-up a novel food-based Global Diet Quality Score (GDQS) for standardized assessment and surveillance of dietary nutrient adequacy and noncommunicable disease risk in diverse populations" – NGHP (**Zoom only**)

## UPDATES FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S DIB COMMITTEE

Welcome to the sixth of our monthly updates regarding Diversity, inclusion and Belonging within the Department of Nutrition! This column will provide updates regarding NUT-DIB committee efforts along with departmental wide updates for newest developments, changes, and initiatives. While we are currently establishing useful forms of communication to/from the committee, please feel free to submit anonymously via our Qualtrics form [https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8D642fDG6wcRNUG](https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8D642fDG6wcRNUG)

## NUTRITION SOURCE UPDATES

### MIND Diet Review

Dementia is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., driving many to search for ways to prevent cognitive decline. The Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay, or MIND diet, targets the health of the aging brain. Learn more: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/mind-diet/>

### Nutrient feature: Copper

Found in some foods and in supplements, copper works to assist various enzymes that produce energy for the body, break down and absorb iron, and build red blood cells, collagen, connective tissue, and brain neurotransmitters. Learn more about this trace mineral: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/copper/>



### Make it at home: Farro with Confetti Vegetables

Diced “confetti” vegetables (including zucchini, summer squash, bell pepper, eggplant) are slow-roasted and mixed with whole-grain farro in this delicious side dish: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/farro-roasted-confetti-vegetables/>

(See: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>)

## MORE NEW FACES IN THE DEPARTMENT



***Dr Tian-Shin Yeh***  
***Visiting Scientist***

Dr Yeh was a postdoctoral fellow in our Nutrition Department under the mentorship of ***Drs Alberto Ascherio, Marc Weisskopf, and Walter Willett*** from 2020 to 2021 right after she graduated from Harvard with a PhD in Clinical Epidemiology. For her second year as a postdoctoral fellow, she joined the Harvard-Oxford Program in Epidemiology from 2021 to 2022 under the mentorship of ***Drs David Hunter and Walter Willett***. She has just taken a faculty position as an Assistant Professor and an Attending Physician in Taiwan, specializing in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Dr Yeh is delighted to be back in the Nutrition Department which she feels is like a warm big family, serving as a Visiting Scientist. She feels honored to be invited to speak about “Diet & Subjective Cognitive Decline” at the Harvard-Oxford Program in Epidemiology Symposium on ***Developments in Neuroepidemiology*** alongside ***Drs Alberto Ascherio, Cornelia M. van Duijn, and Thomas Littlejohns*** right before leaving Boston. Also, she is very grateful to attend Harvard’s in-person commencement ceremony for the

class of 2020 this May and meet her mentors and good friends again to say farewell. This was a historic reunion because the ceremony was previously postponed two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic!

## SAVE THE DATE!

We are pleased to announce that the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health will hold its 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Stare-Hegsted Lecture on Monday, November 14, 2022, from 4:00-5:15 pm.\*



Dr Alice H. Lichtenstein, DSc, Tufts University, will be this year's speaker. Dr Lichtenstein, who is an alumna of the Department of Nutrition, is a senior scientist and director of the [Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory at the HNRCA](#), as well as the Stanley N. Gershoff Professor of Nutrition Science and Policy at the Friedman School. Dr Lichtenstein also serves as the executive editor of the [Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter](#) and Associate Editor of the [Journal of Lipid Research](#)

Dr Lichtenstein's general research focus is on assessing the interplay between diet and heart disease risk factors, specifically addressing issues related to *trans* fatty acids, soy protein and isoflavones, sterol/stanol esters, novel vegetable oils differing in fatty acid profile and glycemic index, in postmenopausal females and older males. Selected issues have been investigated in animal models and cell systems with the aim of determining the mechanisms by which dietary factors alter cardiovascular disease risk. Additional work is focused on population basis studies to assess the relationship between cholesterol homeostasis biomarkers and nutrient biomarkers, and cardiovascular disease risk; the application of systematic review methods to the field of nutrition, and the impact of taste acuity on food choices and cardiometabolic risk.

Dr. Lichtenstein was vice-chair of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) of the USDA/HHS. She also served on the 2000 DGAC. Dr. Lichtenstein has chaired AHA's Nutrition Committee, and served on the 2013 AHA/ACC' task forces on practice guidelines to reduce CVD risk.

**\*Should current Covid restrictions be lifted by that time, Dr Lichtenstein will deliver her lecture in person, final time and venue TBD. Otherwise, this will be a zoom presentation.**

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

Early bird registration is currently available.  
**REGISTER NOW!** <https://tkresearchconference.org/>



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- Interactive breakout sessions
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**Early Bird Registration Now Open**

Abstract submissions opening in April 2022





Funding for this conference was made possible (in part) by R13AT0011986 from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) and the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). The views expressed in written conference materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention by trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

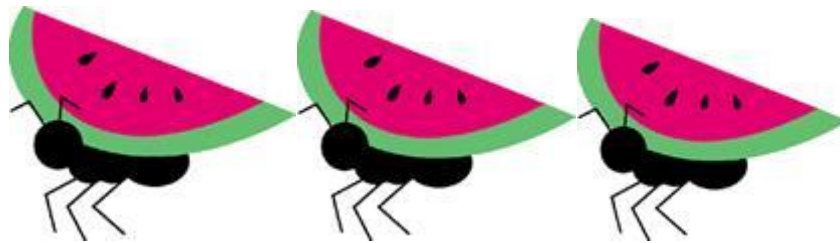
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\*In the event that local municipalities, state health boards, sponsoring institutions or CDC guidance restricts the opportunity for an in-person gathering in October 2022, the conference will be conducted virtually, and all in-person tickets will be converted to the standard virtual program pricing, and the difference will be refunded accordingly.

The Nutrition Department Picnic will be on  
**October 16, 2022 from 11 am to 2 pm**  
at the **Larz Anderson Park in Brookline at the BBQ Shelter.**  
(same venue as past years)

Food and drinks will be served.

**PLEASE RSVP**  
by completing this [form!](#)



**Transportation to the Larz Anderson Park:**

**Please note parking is extremely limited.** Side street parking can be an option (Avon Street, etc.). Carpooling is advised. It is best to bike/walk or take an Uber/taxi to the park. There is not a form of public transportation that will bring you directly to the area near the park.

**Location:**

Larz Anderson Park - Newton St. and Goddard Ave. (across from 225 Goddard Ave. in Brookline, MA)

**Directions:**

Directions can be accessed via the link under the map image at:

<http://www.brooklinema.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Larz-Anderson-Park-87>

# Precision Nutrition Forum

## 1<sup>st</sup> edition – Gothenburg

12–13 SEPTEMBER 2022, GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN



# Precision Nutrition Forum, 1st edition – Gothenburg:

Using Multi-OMICs for Data-Driven Systems Epidemiology - Towards Precision Nutrition

## Scope

Metabolic diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers, pose a major burden on public health systems, accounting for most global chronic diseases and deaths. These conditions share complex underlying pathophysiology interacting with environmental, lifestyle, and dietary factors. It is widely recognized that poor diet quality contributes substantially to these conditions, but the mechanisms by which diet influences metabolic health are not well studied. Emerging tools and technologies, including metabolomics profiling, can help elucidate mechanisms underpinning the relationship between diet and metabolic disease. In addition, integrating metabolomics with other omics data is critical to understanding interindividual differences in the metabolic response to dietary interventions. Therefore, OMICs profiling in nutritional studies can elucidate the biological role of diet composition in chronic disease etiology and expand the evidence base of dietary guidelines in the general population. Moreover, a thorough understanding of the molecular links between diet and disease risk could pave the way for precision nutrition, where dietary advice and interventions are tailored to individuals based on their health status, lifestyle factors, social-cultural factors, and genetics and other molecular phenotypes.

The goal of the Precision Nutrition Forum, 1st edition – Gothenburg is to bring together interdisciplinary expertise in nutritional epidemiology, high-throughput omics technologies (genomics, metabolomics, metagenomics, and proteomics), and data science and present the latest concepts and advances in precision nutrition research. The Forum will gather world-leading multi-omics and precision nutrition experts from Europe and the US, with the goal of fostering international collaboration through the Swedish cohort infrastructures and the national Data-Driven Life Science initiative (DDLs).

Hosted at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden

**Chalmers scientific organization:** Clemens Wittenbecher & Rikard Landberg

**External scientific organization committee members:** Marta Guasch-Ferré, Jordi Merino

**Head of administrative organization:** Mia Gartner

**Funded by:** Hjärtlungfonden, Chalmers Area of Advance Health Engineering, Cancerfonden and DDLs

The confirmed speakers include Frank B Hu, Paul W Franks, Marju Orho-Melander, Andrew T Chan, Walter C Willett, Miguel A Martínez-González, Shilpa Bhupathiraju, Rikard Landberg, Matthias Schulze, Qi Sun, Marta Guasch-Ferré, Karl Michaëlsson, Clemens Wittenbecher, Clary Clish, Jessica A. Lasky-Su, Liming Liang, Carl Brunius, Mats Jirstrand, Fredrik Bäckhed, Ann-Sofie Sandberg, Majken K. Jensen, Jordi Merino, and Göran Bergström.

Agenda: <https://www.chalmers.se/en/departments/bio/calendar/Pages/Precision-Nutrition-Forum-1.aspx>

Registration:

 [Link to registration](#), deadline: **2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022**

 [Link to abstract submission](#), deadline: **12<sup>th</sup> August 2022**