

NUTRI NEWS

The Department of Nutrition

December 2022

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The End of Year Holiday Message from Dr. Frank Hu



Dear Members of the Nutrition Department:

As 2022 draws to a close, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for your steadfast support and commitment to our department. Amid the remaining challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and even though many of you have begun to return to your offices and classes, you have continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. Our department has continued to advance our educational and research missions. This fall we welcomed 17 new students to our department, 12 new MPH-65 students and 5 new PhD students.

The past year has seen a continued expansion of our department faculty. **Dr Cindy Leung** has joined the Department as Assistant Professor of Public Health Nutrition. Her research focuses on how food insecurity, participation in federal food programs, and other contextual factors influence diet and health disparities in vulnerable populations. Starting in January 2023, **Dr Kjetil Bjornevik** will join our department as Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition. Kjetil's current work focuses on identifying new risk factors and biomarkers for neurodegenerative diseases. Several new secondary and adjunct faculty members have also joined our department this year, including **Dr Christina Dieli-Conwright, PhD**, (Secondary)

Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition; **Dr Stephen Juraschek, MD, PhD** (Secondary) Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition; **Dr Stephen DeVries, MD**, Adjunct Associate Professor of Nutrition; **Dr Cuilin Zhang, MD, PhD**, Adjunct Professor of Nutrition; **Dr Marta Guasch**, Adjunct Associate Professor of Nutrition.

Our faculty and students have been widely recognized for their outstanding work. **Dr Wafaie Fawzi**, Richard Saltonstall Professor of Population Sciences, and Professor of Nutrition, Epidemiology, and Global Health, was elected to the **National Academy of Medicine (NAM)**. Membership is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievements and commitment to service. **Dr Fawzi** was also a recipient of the **2022 Alumni Award of Merit** given by The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Alumni Association. **Dr Christopher Duggan, MD, MPH**, Professor in the Department of Nutrition, has been named the **Samuel J. Meltzer, MD Professor of Pediatrics in the Field of Gastroenterology**, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. **Professor Miguel Ángel Martínez-González**, Full Professor of the School of Medicine of the University of Navarra, and Adjunct Professor of Nutrition at HSPH, has been distinguished with the **National Gregorio Marañon Award for Medical Research** awarded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation, Spain's most important recognition of someone in the field of scientific research. **Dr Martínez-González** was also honoured to receive the distinction of "**ACADEMICO DE HONOR**" by the Spanish (SE Andalucia) Royal Academy of Medicine. The article by **Dr Josiemer Mattei** and her team, titled "Design and Implementation of PROSPECT: Puerto Rico Observational Study of Psychosocial, Environmental, and Chronic Disease Trends" was selected as one of the **2021 Articles of the Year** by the *American Journal of Epidemiology* and the Society for Epidemiologic Research. Several faculty members in the Department of Nutrition including **Drs Walter Willett, Meir Stampfer**, and **Frank Hu** were ranked at the top by **Research.com's** ranking of the top scientists in the world. These rankings are based on publications and the H-index, which combines the number of publications and how often they have been cited.

Graduating PhD student **Abrania Marrero** was selected as the winner of this year's **Dr Fang-Ching Sun Award**, which is given at the Commencement Ceremony to an outstanding graduating Harvard Chan student who has demonstrated a commitment to promoting the health of vulnerable people. Students **Emily Riseberg** and **Susan Rattigan** were honored with **The Simon, Arpi, and Marie Simonian Research Excellence in Nutrition Prize 2021-2023**, which was established at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health as a permanently endowed fund in 2006 with gifts from Simon J. and Arpi A. Simonian. **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. **Momi Afelin**, a new MPH-65 student in Nutrition & Planetary Health, was invited to present at a panel at the COP27 Summit in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. **Meghan Zimmer**, a first-year PhD student in Public Health Nutrition, has recently received a **Special Service Recognition Award from the National Institutes of Health Epidemiology and Genomics Research Program** for enhancements to the Healthy Eating Index.

Thanks to the great efforts of our Communications Team (**Dr Lilian Cheung, Brett Otis**, and **Nancy Oliveira**), the Department of Nutrition has published its guide for happier and healthier living. The **Healthy Living Guide 2021/2022** features a mix of new and updated content from *The Nutrition Source*, with a focus on tips and strategies for developing healthy habits. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2022/01/06/healthy-living-guide-2021-2022/> Keep an eye out for the 3rd edition of the Guide, which will be published in January!

The Department is preparing for a symposium to launch a new **Mindfulness Center in Public Health** on April 26, 2023, at the Joseph B. Martin Center at Harvard Medical School. The symposium will bring together leading academics, well-known practitioners of mindfulness, and monastics who studied under Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. The establishment of the Center is a milestone for our department.

Looking ahead to 2023, there are reasons for optimism despite the uncertainty and potential danger of Omicron variants, RSV, and the Flu. During this holiday season, it is critical for all of us to continue to

remain vigilant with necessary precautions. It has been a privilege for me to work closely with so many talented and dedicated faculty, staff, and students, and I look forward with enthusiasm to the new year ahead.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and joyful holiday season!



Frank Hu
Chair, Department of Nutrition

NEWS IN THE DEPARTMENT

GRANTS

Dr Josiemer Mattei, Donald and Sue Pritzker Associate Professor of Nutrition, received funding from the American Diabetes Association through an Innovative Clinical or Translational Science Award for the project "Puerto Rico Optimized Mediterranean-like Diet (PROMED): a culturally-tailored diabetes prevention randomized clinical trial". This trial will compare a program delivering traditional foods and customized text messages versus supermarket vouchers and general messages on improving cardiometabolic risk factors, in collaboration with her team members, **Dr Frank Hu** and **Dr Frank Sacks** in the Department of Nutrition, and investigators at FDI Clinical Research of Puerto Rico and Yale University.

PRESENTATIONS

Dr Erica Kenney, Assistant Professor of Public Health Nutrition, was invited to speak at ObesityWeek about school meals programs during COVID. Her talk was titled "School Meal Programs as a Critical Nutrition Safety Net: Lessons from COVID-19"; it was part of a session called *Lessons Learned from Changes to Food Assistance Programs During the Pandemic*. (Correction: This talk had been erroneously reported as given by **Dr Josiemer Mattei**.)

NEW FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

Stephen Juraschek, MD, PhD has been appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition. Dr Juraschek will be co-instructor of **Dr Frank Sacks'** course *NUT 202 - The Biological Basis of Human Nutrition* in Spring 2023. This is a 2.5 credit course. Dr Juraschek is an active ARIC investigator with 2 R01s that will be generating substantial blood pressure measurement data. He is also the principal investigator of 2 clinical trials focused on access to health foods among adults living in Boston area food deserts. All of these projects are opportunities for students interested in nutrition, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, clinical trials, and cohort studies.

NEW FACES IN THE NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

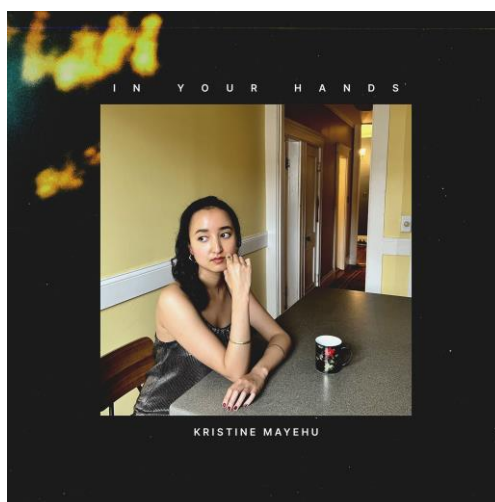


Yunuscan Tokcan
Faculty Assistant

Yunuscan recently joined our department as a Faculty Assistant. He supports ***Drs Christopher Golden, Cindy Leung, Qi Sun and Kyu-Ha Lee***. Yunus grew up in Turkey and lived in Massachusetts as he pursued his undergraduate studies at Wheaton College. Having earned his B.A. in English Literature and his A.A.S. in Business Administration, Yunus pursued a career in education by working as a TEFL teacher abroad. Since he returned stateside, Yunus had been working as a special education teacher as well as a private tutor within the San Francisco Bay Area in California. During his free time, Yunus loves spending quality time outdoors with his best friend Cookie!

STUDENT NEWS

Nour Hammad, PhD student, is teaching a GSAS mini-course titled “Nutrition 101: Your Everyday Guide to Nutrition”. The course is intended to provide Harvard students with an overview of what nutrition is and how to read nutrition labels, lead a healthy lifestyle, eat healthy on a budget, and debunk nutrition myths that are common in everyday life. The course will be offered remotely during the winter break from Jan 9 to Jan 20: MWF from 1pm to 2pm. For more details and to register if you’re interested <https://engage.gsas.harvard.edu/event/8631938>. Feel free to reach out to Nour if you have any questions at nourhammad@fas.harvard.edu. And please share with your Harvard friends!



Second year MPH in Nutrition student ***Kristine Kiross*** (artist name: Kristine Mayehu) releases her debut single available on all major platforms including Spotify and Apple Music!

Stay tuned for more songs in 2023!

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clh9OCqLg-k>

At the American Public Health Association annual meeting last month, several students and postdocs gave excellent presentations. **Matthew Lee**, 4th year PhD student in PHN, presented alongside **Dr Erica Kenney** at a panel presentation on cost-effectiveness models of various nutrition policies, and **Mary Kathryn Poole**, 5th year PhD student in PHN, gave an oral presentation on some of her dissertation work related to de-implementing ineffective public health nutrition programs. The title of her presentation was "A mixed-methods study of school-based body mass index (BMI) reporting programs: The costs to society, population impact on childhood obesity, and case study of policy de-implementation". Both were outstanding!



UPDATES FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S DIB COMMITTEE

Recently, *El Planeta Media*, a newspaper for Spanish speakers in New England, partnered with GBH and Harvard Medical School Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership to establish "Salud", a podcast in Spanish about health issues affecting Latinos in the U.S. It features real-life stories from Latinos and insights from researchers and health practitioners. It is sponsored by the Boston Public Health Commission. Several of our faculty members have been interviewed. **Dr Josiemer Mattei** was featured in the podcast for "What is healthy eating? An easy but complex question" and for "The problem of diabetes among Latinos".

The podcast can be found here: <https://www.wgbh.org/news/salud>.

We hope all are enjoying the fall foliage and new seminars offered through the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging office. The sub-committees are underway and have been setting a foundation for future efforts along with coordinating across the department. Engagement opportunities are being offered, and we are very excited to host some events in the near future. Please be sure to check for invitations, and/or future announcements related to NUT-DIB. We do seek feedback and suggestions related to NUT-DIB initiatives. Please do not hesitate to reach out!

NEWS IN THE DEPARTMENT

Dr David Ludwig Warns about Mistaking Oreo Cookies for Olives when Counting Calories



Kris Snibbe/Harvard Staff Photographer

Dr David Ludwig, HMS Professor of Pediatrics, Professor in the Department of Nutrition, and founder of The Children's Hospital's program for overweight youth, says that our fatter fat cells are the cause, rather than the result, of overeating, and that whole carbs and more healthy fats are the satiating solution. As Americans navigate the holiday season with one eye on their plates and the other on their waistlines, the *Harvard Gazette* talked to him about drivers of the country's obesity crisis and how more of us can maintain a healthy weight.

When asked about the main debate centered on obesity's causes, Ludwig responded that most people intuitively understand that all foods are not alike to the body. Yet the foundations of obesity prevention and treatment remain mired in the calorie in/calorie out, all-calories-are-alike paradigm. If you go to your doctor and seek a weight-loss diet, the medical societies advise the doctor to institute a calorie restriction — typically 500 calories less than your predicted requirements. But if all calories are not metabolically alike, if we burn more calories on one diet than another, then the very notion of an objective calorie requirement makes little sense. This would mean that calorie requirements will vary, based not only on physical activity, but also based on the foods we choose. In other words, 100 calories of Oreos would affect body fat storage differently than 100 calories of olives. Ludwig states that "When 95 percent of the population can't stick to a calorie-restricted diet for the long term, perhaps the problem isn't willpower, discipline, or compliance. Perhaps the problem is with the prevailing energy-balance paradigm."



The Gazette asked Ludwig how we should think about all of this as we come into the holidays, when we gather and maybe eat too much? And according to Ludwig, “There is some evidence that people gain much of their annual weight increase during key windows through the year. The extra calories, even if they come during a relatively short time window, seem to get stuck in our bodies, ratcheting up the weight gain for the year. So we do need to consider this during the holiday period. But a lower-carbohydrate diet doesn’t have to involve restriction and deprivation. Quite the opposite. The aim is to give the body all the calories it wants, but in a different form that supports metabolism and promotes satiety. Fortunately, high-fat foods like nuts and nut butters, full-fat dairy products — especially fermented — avocado, olive oil, even dark chocolate are not only nutritious, but also delicious.

Excerpted from: [https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/12/eating-more-during-the-holidays-dont-mistake-oreo-calories-for-olive-calories/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020221212%20\(1\)](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/12/eating-more-during-the-holidays-dont-mistake-oreo-calories-for-olive-calories/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020221212%20(1))

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, planetary nutrition, public health 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 and spring semesters, live seminars will be held in FXB G-13. zoom link for viewing will be available one week prior to each seminar.

Our Fall Monday Nutrition Seminar Series has come to a close. There will be no seminars during the Winter Recess. Our Spring Monday Nutrition Seminar Series will begin in late January 2023.

NUTRITION SOURCE UPDATES

Holiday gift guide

Still a few items left on your holiday shopping list? From olive oil to a home-cooked meal, here are 17 creative gift ideas: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2015/12/03/healthy-gift-guide-17-ideas-for-giving-the-gift-of-health/>

Food feature: Winter Squash

Along with being uniquely beautiful in a variety of colors and shapes, the firm flesh of winter squash is ideal for soups and other warming dishes:

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/food-features/winter-squash/>

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

NUTRITION HOLIDAY PARTY A SMASHING SUCCESS!





