Harvard T.H. Chan | SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

NUTRI NEWS
The Department of Nutrition

May 2023

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2023!

The culmination of our graduating students' hard work ended in the annual celebrations held by the School and University. Twenty-one students graduated from our Department this year. The Class of 2023 includes students who graduated in November 2022, March 2023, and May 2023. The Harvard Chan School Convocation was held from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm on Wednesday, May 24, 2023 at the Reggie Lewis Center, Roxbury Crossing. The Harvard University Commencement was held on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Harvard Yard. This year's Commencement Speaker was **Carlos Alvarado Quesada**, the 48th President of the Republic of Costa Rica. President Alvarado is widely recognized for helping make Costa Rica a world leader in the fight against climate change. President Alvarado also led a successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic and advocated for increased international cooperation to ensure faster and more equitable access to vaccines. Before becoming president, he served as minister of labor and social security, minister of human development and social inclusion, and executive president of Costa Rica's Joint Social Welfare Institute, which is responsible for implementing public programs helping the underprivileged population.

Once again, the Department of Nutrition will award degrees to an amazing cohort of students, with a wide range of backgrounds and interests. **Dr. Frank Hu**, Chair and Fredrick Stare Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, extended his congratulations to the new graduates, "I'm so proud of the remarkable accomplishment of our students. They have demonstrated passion and strong commitments to improving

human and planetary health. We wish them all the best for the next chapter of their career and looking forward to seeing what they will accomplish in the future."

The following students received their Harvard Chan School degrees:

Agata Atayde
MPH-65 Nutrition

This May I will be graduating from the MPH-65 Nutrition program with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health. My research focus throughout the program was human milk bioactive components and their association with preterm brain development in the NICU.
Through the Maternal and Child Health Leadership Lab, I was able to work closely with Dr Mandy Brown Belfort and her team at Mass General Brigham.

Next, I am looking forward to starting medical school at Brown this August, and incorporating my public health background along the way. These last two years at Harvard have been incredibly enriching, and I am grateful for the wonderful friends I made along the way.

Katie Donnelly
MPH-65 Nutrition

Katie Donnelly is graduating from The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health with a Masters in Public Health - Nutrition. While completing her degree, Katie's research interests focused on food security. **Dr Walter Willett** served as Katie's advisor during her time at Harvard and **Dr Erica Kenney** mentored and worked with Katie while she completed her independent study.

"My whole time at Harvard has felt like a dream. It's been an absolute pleasure to learn from some of the most esteemed professionals in the public health field and to learn alongside my classmates. Since finishing up my degree in December, I have been working at a brewery as a Director of Sustainability to help decrease food waste and to put into place sustainable practices during the brewing process."

Samantha Jaffe
MPH-65 Nutrition

Samantha Jaffe will graduate with a Masters in Public Health Nutrition, with concentrations in Maternal and Child Health and Global Health and Nutrition. While at Harvard Chan her favorite NUTR courses were *Nutrition and Global Health, The Biological Basis of Human Nutrition*, and *Nutritional Epidemiology.*

Samantha had a fellowship in The Maternal and Child Health Leadership Lab, and she is very appreciative to **Dr Henning Tiemeier** for giving her this opportunity and helping her grow an interest in maternal and child health. She was also a Graduate Student Intern with the BetterBirth team at Ariadne Labs (from Jan 2022-Dec 2023).

Since graduation, Samantha has worked as a research project assistant supporting multiple global maternal and child health projects across the BetterBirth team at Ariadne Labs. In May 2023, she will be moving to London, UK to work as an Associate at Rabin Martin, a global health strategy consulting firm.

"I really enjoyed my experience at HPSH. It allowed me to explore different and new areas of public health and nutrition that have been central to the career in global health and nutrition I hope to have and will be beginning."

Emily Murphy
MPH-65 Nutrition

Emily Murphy will be graduating with her MPH in Nutrition. A passion of Emily's throughout her public health program was the intersection of food access and health. During her coursework, Emily completed a fellowship for a local non-profit healthcare center implementing and evaluating a teaching kitchen for pediatric patients on Medicaid. After graduation, Emily will stay local to the Boston area and continues to support the nonprofit where she received her fellowship. She is now directing wellness and care management initiatives and supporting monitoring and program evaluation planning as the organization kicks off a multiyear evaluation.

Alexandra Yunker
MPH-65 Nutrition

I graduated in March 2023 with a Master of Public Health (MPH) in Nutrition and an interdisciplinary concentration in Maternal and Child Health. During my time at HSPH, I had the pleasure of working as a research assistant in **Dr Christina Dieli-Conwright's** exercise oncology laboratory at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI). I was also thrilled to complete my summer practicum project with Dr Dieli-Conwright as my preceptor, in collaboration with the DFCI/Boston Children's Hospital Family Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Outcomes Clinic, where I developed a nutritional and lifestyle screening tool for childhood brain tumor survivors. In addition, I was honored to be the Teaching Fellow for NUT200 this past Fall 2022 semester, under the mentorship of **Dr Shilpa Bhupathiraju**. During my free time, I enjoyed serving on the Countway Library Garden advisory team and volunteering with Fresh Truck (About Fresh) in their Mission Hill market.

I'd like to express my gratitude and thanks to all the wonderful faculty and staff in the Department of Nutrition, in particular my advisor **Dr Juliana Cohen**. Finally, a big congratulations to all the graduates! I'm humbled to have experienced this journey with such accomplished and supportive cohort-mates, and I look forward to all your future contributions to the field of public health nutrition.

Elisabetta Ferrero
MPH-65 Nutrition

I recently graduated with a Master of Public Health in Nutrition, with a concentration in Nutrition and Global Health. During the program and up until now, I have been working as a research assistant for the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center, under Dr David Ludwig and Dr Cara Ebbeling, and I am now interested in expanding my research experience to global nutrition projects.

I am extremely grateful for my experience at the Chan School, and for the connections I've made with my professors and classmates. I also want to thank **Dr David Ludwig, Dr Cara Ebbeling**, and **Dr Qi Sun**, my advisor at the school, for their continued support and mentorship during the program.

Sherri Cuffe
MPH-65 Nutrition

I received my MPH in Nutrition and my primary research focus was on healthy aging. During my time at HSPH, I completed concentrations in global health, and maternal and child health. The courses I chose gave me the opportunity to examine nutrition across the lifespan through a global lens. I was able to apply this unique perspective to my practicum, which I completed at the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing. I was very lucky to have an incredible advisor, **Dr Erica Kenney**, who supported me throughout my program, and a cohort of wonderful students. Throughout my time at the program, I also had the privilege of working at **Dr Christina Dieli-Conwright's** lab at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. I recently moved to Singapore and I'm excited to apply my experience to continue working in the health and longevity space here.

Banapsha Rahman
MPH-65 Nutrition

I recently completed my MPH in Nutrition, with a concentration in Global Health. During my brief time at Harvard, I have had the opportunity to explore many different research areas, including planetary health, childhood obesity, and chronic disease. However, my passion is in food policy. As a student in the Harvard Law School's Food Law and Policy Clinic, I got firsthand experience learning about the intersections of

policy and public health. These types of opportunities are what made my experience at Harvard so unique and valuable. I am grateful for all the meaningful connections and lifelong friendships that I have made along this journey. Thank you to my advisor and mentor, **Dr Christopher Golden**, who has been incredibly supportive. While it is bittersweet to say farewell, I am looking forward to a career in advancing effective policies to improve our food systems.

Maura Schwitter
MPH-65 Nutrition

I am a recent graduate from the MPH-65 Nutrition Program with a concentration in Planetary Health. With an interest in sustainable food systems, I pursued a summer practicum with Boston Microgreens, an indoor, hydroponics microgreens farm in South Boston. As a part of my practicum, I helped fulfill the Company's mission to connect the local Boston youth to the food on their plate and educate them on the importance of sustainable farming solutions. My ~15 months at HSPH far exceeded my expectations - I was constantly inspired and challenged by my classmates and teachers, and I am incredibly excited to put my public health nutrition learnings into practice.
I recently kicked off my next adventure as a Consultant at Bain & Company in Boston, and as a part of Bain, I am hopeful to help bridge the gap between public health research and industry priorities through Bain's Agribusiness and Food practices.

Thank you to HSPH for such a fulfilling experience - I feel proud to now be a part of the Harvard alumni community.

Kristine Kiross
MPH-65 Nutrition

Kristine Kiross will be graduating with her MPH in Nutrition with a focus on global nutrition and policy. Her interests within domestic and international food security issues led her to conduct research with Dr Erica Kenney on the effects of a sugar-sweetened beverage tax on targeted marketing and beverage availability for children. Kristine also joined the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic where she had the opportunity to evaluate potential legal and policy solutions that may be effective in improving the food system and population health. She is grateful for the experiences and support she had at Harvard and is excited to start her new role as an Analyst at Mathematica.

Hannah Fuller
MPH-65 Nutrition

I received my MPH-65 in Nutrition degree. My area of interest was Planetary Health, and one of my favorite courses was Intro to Planetary Health taught by **Dr Chris Golden**! Outside of classes I enjoyed being in the Climate Leader Program because it allowed me to meet and discuss climate issues with graduate students from different Harvard schools. **Dr**

Stephanie Smith-Warner was my advisor and I appreciated all the support and guidance she provided.

A highlight of this program was my wonderful cohort. I can't wait to see all the great work everyone will do. After graduating in December I moved to Austin, Texas and started my job as Sustainability & Energy Analyst at Longevity Partners.

Ya Xuan Sun
MPH -65 Nutrition

My name is Ya Xuan Sun, and I will be graduating from the MPH-65 Nutrition program in 2023. It's hard to believe that my time at Chan is coming to an end. This experience has been incredibly valuable and rewarding, and I am grateful that I made the decision to study at Harvard. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the professors I have had the privilege of learning from during my time at Harvard. Their expertise, guidance, and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping my educational journey. I am also thankful to my administrative advisor, **Stefanie Dean**, and my academic advisor, **Dr Teresa Fung**, for their invaluable support and assistance throughout my studies.

During my time at Harvard, I had the incredible opportunity to choose classes not only within Chan but also across various schools such as HKS, HGSE, MIT, and more. This allowed me to learn from and connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds. In addition to being a student, I had the privilege of working as a research assistant at the Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity at HSPH in 2022. Furthermore, I was fortunate to be a part of the teaching team as a teaching fellow for three courses: NUT 202, MPH 102, and MPH 103. In these roles, I had the honor of closely collaborating with esteemed professors, including **Dr Frank Sacks, Dr Rifat Atun**, and **Dr Ted Witherell**. During my final semester at Chan, I had the privilege of working closely with **Dr Walter Willett** on promoting sustainable planetary diet patterns as part of the EAT-Lancet Report 2.0. Additionally, I had the opportunity to collaborate with **Dr Lilliam Cheung** as one of the editors on **The Nutrition Source** team. These experiences have been truly invaluable and have enriched my education at Harvard.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that I have been selected for a consultant position at the WHO Western Pacific Office, where I will be supporting the implementation of healthy ageing initiatives in countries of the Western Pacific Region. I am thrilled about this opportunity to make a tangible impact and continue my journey in the field of nutrition and public health. Once again, I am sincerely grateful for the incredible experiences and opportunities I have had at Harvard, and I look forward to the exciting path that lies ahead.

Sharan Rai
PhD, Population Health Sciences & Nutritional Epidemiology

Sharan Rai graduated in November 2022 with a PhD in Population Health Sciences specializing in nutritional epidemiology (advisor: **Dr Qi Sun**). Additionally, Sharan completed the department's interdisciplinary concentration in Obesity Epidemiology and Prevention. Sharan's dissertation was supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and focused on lignan intake, gout, and weight change. She will continue to be mentored by Dr Sun as a CIHR-funded postdoctoral fellow in his research group where she will examine the intersection of diet, the metabolome, and the risk of gout.

NEWS IN THE DEPARTMENT

GRANTS

Dr Erica Kenney (PI), Assistant Professor of Public Health Nutrition, and *Dr Eric Rimm (Co-PI),* Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through a Healthy Eating Research Special Solicitation on Evaluating Pandemic Policies. The grant, titled "*U*nderstanding *P*andemic *W*IC-waivers: *A*ccess, *R*edemptions and *D*isparities (*UPWARD)",* seeks to better understand the impact of the COVID-related Spring 2020 physical presence waivers and the June 2021 increase in the cash value benefit for fruit and vegetables on the utilization of WIC. The research team, which also includes *Meg Zimmer, Mary Kathryn Poole, Cris Gago*, and *Rebecca Mozaffarian*, will explore the impact of the two policy changes on WIC benefit redemption; program retention and participation; participants' fruit and vegetable intake and overall diet quality; and how changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may have influenced the effectiveness of the policies. Researchers will also estimate if impacts of the policies were equitably distributed by WIC participants' race/ethnicity.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Dr Alberto Ascherio, Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, has been invited to give the 2023 Falch Lecture, titled "The Epstein-Barr Virus as the Leading Cause of Multiple Sclerosis and the Possible Viral Etiology of Other Neurodegenerative Diseases", at the University of Bergen, Norway, on Wednesday, May 24, 2023. This is one of Europe's most prestigious awards.

This year's **Simon, Arpi, and Marie Simonian Research Excellence in Nutrition Prize** recipients are *Nour Hammad* and *Cami Christopher* along with their advisors, *Dr Walter Willett, Dr Deirdre Tobias,* and *Dr Heather Eliassen*. The Simonian Prize is given to recognize students with unusually high academic achievement while in our department. In addition to this recognition, the award includes a small monetary gift and recognition on a plaque in the hallway just outside the Nutrition Library.

The following MPH students were awarded the **Rose Service Learning Fellowship**: *Muriel Samuels, Momi Afelin*, and *Yhon Salvatierra*. These fellowships are funded by a generous gift from *Dr Deborah Rose*, SM '75, to support students and post-doctoral fellows at Harvard Chan School to travel and engage in service learning projects.

Mingyang Song, Assistant Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and Nutrition, has received two mentoring awards: (1) **The 2023 Harvard Chan Student Mentoring Award**. His selection was based on nominations submitted by students, which were reviewed by an awards committee. Mingyang received a number of nominations for this award. In their nominations, students wrote about the significant impact that his mentoring has had on their education at Harvard Chan, including "Mingyang is the best mentor I have ever met!". The awards were presented during the Harvard Chan School's Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, May 23rd at 11:30 am in the Kresge Courtyard tent. In addition, all of the award winners were recognized during the school's convocation on May 24th. (2) **Best SM2 Thesis Mentor**, awarded by the Department of Epidemiology. This award recognizes excellence in mentoring SM2 students in their thesis projects.

PUBLICATIONS

Alexandra Yunker, March 2023 MPH graduate, published the following paper with her mentor *Dr Christina Dieli-Conwright:*

Wilson, R.L.; Soja, J.; **Yunker, A.G**.; Uno, H.; Gordon, E.; Cooney, T.; **Dieli-Conwright, C.M**. Obesity Risk of Pediatric Central Nervous System Tumor Survivors: A Cross-Sectional Study. Nutrients 2023, 15, 2269. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15102269

Christopher Golden, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Planetary Health, and colleagues have published the following papers:

Shepon A, Wu T, Kremen C, et al. Exploring scenarios for the food system-zoonotic risk interface. *Lancet Planet Health* 2023; **7**(4): e329-e35.

Elizabeth Bondi-Kelly, Haipeng Chen, Christopher Golden, Nikhil Behari, and Milind Tambe. 2023. "Predicting Micronutrient Deficiency with Publicly Available Satellite Data". AI Magazine Spring 2023, 44(1): 30-40.

PRESENTATIONS

Christopher Duggan, MD, S*amuel J. Meltzer, MD Professor of Pediatrics in the Field of Gastroenterology; Professor in the Department of Nutrition,* presented a talk entitled "Nutrition Integration into Medical School Curricula" on April 26, 2023 at a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Workshop on Translating Nutrition Science from Bench to Plate.

DISSERTATION DEFENSES

Mary Kathryn Poole, doctoral student, successfully defended her dissertation titled "Assessing the implementation of US programs and policies for the prevention of food insecurity and obesity in school settings" on May 4th.

More Student News

Kenny Mendoza, who is a Ph.D. Candidate in Nutritional Epidemiology has been selected as the recipient of the **2023 American Society for Nutrition (ASN) Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship**. The **ASN Foundation Predoctoral Fellowships** fund outstanding research projects proposed and conducted by ASN members enrolled in a United States graduate program in nutrition. This ASN award recognizes the excellence of Kenny's proposed project, *Consumption of ultra-processed foods, associated serum metabolites, and type 2 diabetes risk in The Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL).*

Kenny has also been named as a finalist for the **Emerging Leaders in Nutrition Science Poster Competition**, an award competition of the ASN, which recognizes the highest quality research presented by students and young investigators at **NUTRITION 2023**. Nearly 1,000 abstracts were submitted by students and postdoctoral fellows, and the **Emerging Leaders in Nutrition Science Poster Competition** aims to recognize the top 10% highest scoring abstracts. More than 400 nutrition scientists rated the abstracts. With his research entitled *Ultra-processed Food Consumption is Associated with Higher Type 2 Diabetes Risk in The Hispanic Community Health Study / Study of Latinos Finalists*, Kenny will compete as a finalist in the poster competition and be recognized for their achievement during **NUTRITION 2023**, the ASN's annual flagship meeting which will be held from July 22-25, 2023 in Boston, MA. "Through this program, the ASN celebrates the achievements of our rising stars," stated Martha Belury, PhD, RDN, President, ASN. "The Society looks forward to watching their future contributions to advance our understanding of nutrition science and practice."

Kenny extends his gratitude to his mentors and professors at the Department of Nutrition, including **Drs Josiemer Mattei, Frank Hu**, and **Eric Rimm,** who supported his ASN application. He also wants to acknowledge the valuable contribution of all the coauthors in his research.

NEW FACES IN THE DEPARTMENT

The following people have recently joined the Nutrition Department. Please take a minute to say "hello" to them when you see them in the hallway.

Jessica Duni
Faculty Assistant

Jessica recently joined our department as a Faculty Assistant. She will be supporting **Drs Christopher Golden, Cindy Leung, Qi Sun** and **Kyu-Ha Lee.** Jessica grew up in the North Shore area of Boston and has an undergraduate degree in Political Science and a minor in Anthropology.

She has recently completed her Masters in Business Administration from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Before joining HSPH, Jessica interned as an Assistant Product Manager at Puma Corporate office in Somerville, MA. She enjoys photography, exploring new restaurants, and traveling to Albania to visit her family during the summer.

Maryam Kazemi, RD, MSc, Ph.D., CPT
T32 Postdoctoral Fellow

Dr Kazemi is a Women's Health Researcher specializing in polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Maryam joined the Department of Nutrition in April 2023 as a Postdoctoral Fellow and is working with **Dr Jorge Chavarro** and **Dr Francine Laden**. She completed her past training at Cornell University and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, NY. Maryam has research and clinical experience in Nutrition, Metabolism, Reproductive Endocrinology, and Genomics. Her research is focused on elucidating the relative contributions of environmental and biological pathways to the mechanisms of reproductive and cardiometabolic derangements in women with the ultimate aim of designing novel and effective precision lifestyle modifications.

MORE DEPARTMENT NEWS

On behalf of Intake, Center for Dietary Assessment, **Dr Sabri Bromage**, Department Associate, and colleagues welcome your involvement to help promote uptake and use of the Global Diet Quality Score (GDQS) metric and app through your engagement with the Social Media Toolkit that they have designed and developed. The Toolkit provides a variety of customizable graphics, hashtags, and messages that can be shared on social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, to help raise awareness about the importance of diet quality, the need to collect data on what people are eating, and how GDQS data can be

used to inform programs and policies designed to improve diet quality. Advocates and users of the GDQS metric and the GDQS app are invited to use and adapt messages from the GDQS Social Media Toolkit to further encourage collection and use of diet quality data.

To learn more: https://www.intake.org/index.php/news/gdqs-social-media-toolkit

Dr Christopher Golden receives grant to strengthen public health systems through AI

As a recent recipient of the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s $140 million investment in artificial intelligence (AI) research, development, and implementation, **Dr Christopher Golden**, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Planetary Health*,* will be a co-leader of a project aimed at strengthening Madagascar's public health system through AI tools. This project falls under the Carnegie Mellon University-led AI Institute for Societal Decision Making (AI-SDM), one of seven new AI institutes established with the NSF funding.

Since AI-SDM will focus on creating tools that enable people to better predict and respond to uncertainties and resource constraints during disasters and in settings of poverty, its goals differ from "tech-oriented or capital-generating AI," said Golden. "It's about how AI can produce more efficient, more just, and overall better decision making to improve society."

This will be a cross-collaboration with **Milind Tambe**, Gordon McKay Professor of Computer Science and Director of the Center for Research in Computation and Society at Harvard, and **Francesca Dominici**, Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard Chan School and co-director of the Harvard Data Science Initiative, who has a "foundational role" in the project.

According to Golden, "Our dream is to have a functioning climate-smart public health platform—a software-engineered data system in which new data coming in from health facilities will seamlessly be overlaid with climate layers, environmental layers, and social layers. This will allow people to see the relationships between all of these factors and best predict where, when, and to what extent things like diseases and disasters will burden populations, especially ones already on the margins."

Because of Golden's deep experience there, Golden and Tambe have chosen Madagascar as the project's setting. Golden has been conducting ecological and public health research in the country for more than two decades and maintains a close relationship with the Ministry of Health. "Because we have a ready and willing audience in the government and access to high resolution and longitudinal data, Madagascar serves as very fertile ground for us to make transformation," Golden said. "Ministry of Health officials have already come to Harvard for consultative sessions and we frequently discuss our plans. It's very much a co-produced project." While these applications will be tailored to the context of Madagascar, they also serve as proof of concept for AI's public health potential, and as replicable models for work in low-resource settings around the world.

Adapted from: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/harvard-chan-schools-christopher-golden-receives-grant-to-strengthen-public-health-systems-through-artificial-intelligence/

How Brain Health Is Linked to Highly Processed Foods

Scientists are still trying to determine how eating packaged foods like cereal and frozen meals has been associated with anxiety, depression and cognitive decline. This is disturbing because roughly 60 percent of the calories in the average American diet come from highly processed foods. As recent studies suggest,

these often delicious, always convenient foods appear to have a significant impact on our minds as well as to contribute to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

Recent research has demonstrated a link between highly processed foods and low mood. New research has also found a connection between high UPF consumption and cognitive decline. Many researchers suggest that eating a healthy diet such as the Mediterranean diet or the MIND diet may offset the detrimental effects of eating ultraprocessed foods, and that following a healthy eating regimen, which is rich in whole grains, green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts, berries, fish, chicken and olive oil, greatly reduced the dementia risk associated with consuming ultraprocessed foods (UPFs).

Much of the research has focused on how poor gut health might affect the brain. For example, diets that are high in ultraprocessed foods are typically low in fiber, which is mostly found in plant-based foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Fiber helps feed the good bacteria in the gut. Chemical additives in UPFs might also have an impact on gut flora. Additionally, poor gut microbiota diversity — as well as a diet high in sugar — may contribute to chronic inflammation, which has been linked to a host of mental and physical issues.

Dr Frank Hu, Professor and Chair of the Department of Nutrition, thinks it's also worth considering the possibility that the link between highly processed foods and mental health works in both directions. "Diet does influence mood, but the reverse is also true. When you get stressed, anxious or depressed, you tend to eat more unhealthy foods, in particular ultraprocessed foods . that are high in sugar, fat and chemical additives."

Adapted from: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/04/well/eat/ultraprocessed-food-mental-health.html?unlocked_article_code=1a6Occ1ODKXarDxz39umbinTdX_EdFE78tU-xdUqtEXVfjbkIYB3630VhqcCpVmDHOK3XkC6D4IuqRUI6M0Ip_52d414JanR5XAsFMbopj7jk1t4u1NHG89c7cP_qbI_DnJA_e4BK1TCUIWZf8L0sAAQXC3TRJtYW4mGFxCeWq0AKe3H2dJ5ke7GS-3G3oQheIsncI6aKD5BaTlE2CkvqkoEEzq7Dt4DlkahZ61ShvFTt99eF64SM9BO-yaUGVLMvEaT_GBD4a1huoLZ1QvJ2N1lcTXVW2TLCTp2gkwaJNIhs9TxSX_gQz0ZI1QpCMJn8m-RZLNaLMeJ-kK5d-kG7s4MElcBZFyrl-ROmg&smid=url-share

MPH 2023 Graduate Sherri Cuffe investigates the links between lifestyle choices and healthy aging

Photo: Courtesy of Sherri Cuffe

After confronting a personal health crisis of her own, **Sherri Cuffe** set about learning how she could improve her quality of life through exercise and food—and later used her knowledge to launch two health-focused businesses. Now, as a graduate of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, she's focused on exploring ways that lifestyle changes can help people reduce their risks for age-related diseases.

Previously a medical technician at an assisted living home while an undergraduate at UCLA, Cuffe worked with multiple residents over the age of 80 and observed the positive effects that social interaction and good nutritional choices had on their health and cognitive abilities. Thus, the seeds for her interest in healthy aging were planted early in her career.

After Cuffe started experiencing her own significant health challenges several years later, she started to consider the healing potential of lifestyle changes. Her top action item became changing what she ate.

After a year had passed since her diagnoses, Cuffe was finally feeling like she was recovering and regaining her strength. Thus, she felt that the time was right for a new challenge. "I was driven to find a way I could have an impact on the quality of life of others," she said. So Sherri launched Cookie Collective in LA in 2015, and offered products that were free of the top eight food allergens, including wheat, peanuts, and dairy. She handled every aspect of the business, including getting her own kitchen commercially certified, developing the recipes, doing all the baking, and making deliveries. She also educated the retailers she worked with around food allergy awareness and the importance of providing healthy alternatives. According to Cuffe, "It was hard work, but the chance to help people who were suffering from allergies and autoimmune disorders like me made it worth it." Three years later, she decided to close the business and launch a new company focused on Pilates-based physical therapy, a practice she'd found had helped her manage her chronic pain.

Cuffe then enrolled as a student at Harvard Chan. For her MPH practicum, Cuffe worked as a research associate with the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing. There, she conducted an analysis of the elderly person's integrated care system in the UK and identified gaps in the research on aging and lifestyle factors, including nutrition. Her project also explored the impact of intergenerational relationships on quality of life.

She then worked as a research assistant and exercise trainer at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute while earning her degree. Alongside **Dr Christina Dieli-Conwright**, Associate Professor, Sherri examined how personalized exercise interventions might improve cancer outcomes. "This incredible experience led me to a renewed focus on longevity from a holistic point of view," Cuffe said.

According to Cuffe's advisor, **Dr Erica Kenney**, Assistant Professor of Public Health Nutrition, "Sherri exemplifies one of the most inspiring qualities of MPH students: she pulls together experiences and knowledge across many different domains, like her experiences in business and in research, and then combines that with new ideas to move interventions forward, I've learned a lot from her about nutrition and longevity and am excited to see what creative applications she makes for her knowledge in her career—I have no doubt she will have an impact to improve longevity and quality of life for older adults moving forward."

After completing her coursework this winter, Cuffe moved to Singapore, where the country's life expectancy is among the highest in the world, and the government has been taking action to improve elder care. "In the long term, I hope to become a leader in the longevity field," she said. "I want to help people around the world improve their quality of life and extend it through nutrition and lifestyle interventions."

Adapted from: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/lifestyle-choices-healthy-aging/

New Research Scientist Appointments

Dr Yang Hu has been appointed Research Scientist in the Department of Nutrition.

NUTRITION SOURCE UPDATES

MIND diet review
Dementia is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, driving many people 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/

- **New research highlight: MIND diet may reduce risk of dementia**
  Researchers analyzed the diets and cognitive health of 242,185 middle-aged and older adults using data from three prospective cohort studies and a meta-analysis. Among 18,136 participants in the cohort studies, a stronger adherence to the MIND diet was associated with a lower risk of dementia—a link observed across the entire participant pool as well as within subgroups defined by sex, age, smoking status, and body mass index. Among participants in the meta-analysis—224,049 people across 11 cohort studies—the top third most closely adhering to the MIND diet had a lower risk of dementia compared to those in the bottom third who were following the diet less closely. https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/mind-diet-may-reduce-risk-of-dementia/

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/

SAVE THE DATE: NUTRITION 2023 RETURNS TO BOSTON JULY 22-25, 2023 (AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION)!

The American Society for Nutrition is meeting in person this July in Boston.

NUTRITION 2023 - American Society for Nutrition

You're invited to attend the preeminent meeting with leading research on the hottest topics in nutrition. Following three years of virtual meetings, NUTRITION 2023 will offer an opportunity for nutrition scientists, clinicians, policy experts, industry leaders, and more to break away from their screens and to gather, network, and share knowledge face-to-face.

nutrition.org

9th annual OMICS Symposium: Advances, Applications, and Translation in Nutrition and Epidemiology

June 8th, 2023 – Hybrid event Kresge G1/Live stream on Zoom (recording available on website at a later date)

Co-chaired by Frank B. Hu (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, USA)
and Miguel A. Martínez-González (CIBEROBN, University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain)

Website/Agenda Link   Zoom Registration Link