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Welcome once again to the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology's alumni newsletter, NutrEx. Without further ado, on to the fourth installment!

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact how we operate as a department, intrinsically affecting the way we conduct our teaching, research, and service missions. Though the pandemic brought many challenges, we’ve been able to adapt and even thrive. In these pages, you will learn about recent successes in research, including a large grant from the USDA we received with our colleagues in the WSU College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, wide news media coverage of Dr. Ofer Amram's work, and impactful publications related to COVID-19. We welcomed two new faculty members who joined our MS CPD team this past year, both of whom you will be able to “meet” in this issue.

Our Alumni Spotlight features recent graduate and current MS CPD preceptor Ellen (Arguinchona) Ramus. We’re shaking things up a bit with a Q & A style format for this feature, and we hope you enjoy it. Our Student Spotlight features Jeanine Leach—cancer survivor and grandmother—who obtained the BS NEP degree at 50 years young and is on track to graduate from the MS CPD program this fall!

Please read further to learn more about the many excellent faculty, staff, and students in our department and how they are making a difference in the various settings in which they are contributing to WSU’s land-grant university mission and solving problems in challenging health care environments across the state of Washington and beyond.

Please stay tuned for great things to come.

Cheers!

Glen E. Duncan, PhD, RCEP
Professor and Chair
Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
The typical American diet is not very healthy. We consume insufficient amounts of wholesome plant-based foods, and more than half of our calories come from highly processed, calorie-dense foods lacking nutrients critical for health. Increasing intake of whole grains, legumes, and other crops can improve the quality of our diets, help us control our waistlines, and reduce our risk of conditions like type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Rebalancing our diets toward whole grains and legumes could also reduce the environmental impacts of our diets and the food system overall.

Coordinating researchers across the food system could make healthy plant-based foods more widely available, affordable, and appealing. In collaboration with researchers in WSU’s College of Agriculture Human and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), four faculty members in NEP have been awarded a large federal grant to develop integrated research with experts in agriculture and food science. In September, the United States Department of Agriculture announced a $10 million grant to a large team of WSU researchers led by Dr. Kevin Murphy of the Sustainable Seed Systems Lab in CAHNRS and Drs. Franck Carbonero, Martine Perrigue, Patrick Solverson, and Pablo Monsivais of NEP.

Given the need to promote healthier and sustainable diets for consumers, the long-term goals of this project are to create more nutritious, affordable, and accessible plant-based foods through i) research on the contribution of novel, biofortified crop varieties and food products to human health, and ii) development of nutritious food products made from improved crop varieties grown within sustainable cropping systems.

To accomplish this, the project takes a Soil to Society strategy that addresses gaps in current knowledge and traces the flow of nutrients from agricultural systems and
food production to human nutrition. Research projects will be paired with teaching and extension activities through various partnerships. Bootcamps will be offered to professionals in the food industry but also to dietitians in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and schools. VIVA Farms (https://vivafarms.org) will coordinate workshops of food and agriculture stakeholders as well as closely work with elementary schools to develop educational programs promoting the consumption of whole grains products.

This Soil to Society project will culminate in the synthesis of more sustainable agricultural management strategies and healthy, affordable food products to meet the needs of individuals and communities. It will also help establish WSU as a leading institution working to bridge agriculture and food sciences with human nutrition research. The project launches in early 2022.

The United States Department of Agriculture announced a \$10 MILLION GRANT to a large team of WSU researchers.
FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Kelli Frederick, MEd, RDN, CD is a Washington State University alumni, where she obtained her Master in Teaching degree to enhance her profession as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). Kelli’s career path as an RDN originated at Central Washington University, where she graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Nutrition.

Kelli comes to us with extensive experience as an RDN in dietetics and clinical nutrition management, specializing in nutrition support, working with children with special health care needs, and neonatal nutrition. As a nutrition support dietitian, Kelli found the greatest challenge and reward in working with patients throughout the lifespan as well as working closely with interdisciplinary medical teams. Her transition into management paved a path for the development of leadership skills. She came to pursue a career in education after realizing her passion for mentoring, professional growth, and teaching within the field of nutrition and dietetics.

Following graduate school, Kelli continued to practice in dietetics through consulting while also teaching in public schools. She played a key role in the successful transition of students back into the classroom during the COVID pandemic. Working with students, educators, and administrators to maintain the students' health and safety while returning to an in-person learning environment utilized the leadership and education skills she has built over her career.

Joining the faculty as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology at the College of Medicine has merged Kelli’s practice and professional passions. She is currently teaching a course related to management in dietetics and working with students and community preceptors to mentor and develop future RDN professionals.

Lisa Heneghen, MPH, RDN, CSO, CNSC

Lisa, joined the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology as an Assistant Professor in August 2021. Lisa, a Washington native, returned to the state after a decade in Colorado, where she most recently worked at the University of Colorado Cancer Center. Lisa is a board-certified specialist in oncology nutrition as well as a certified nutrition support clinician. She has spent much of her clinical career working with medically complex populations, including patients diagnosed with head and neck cancers and those undergoing stem cell transplants.

Her education includes a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics from the University of Idaho and a Master of Public Health from Des Moines University. Of particular note is her work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to evaluate the significance of financial toxicity among cancer patients receiving cancer treatment in Colorado.

Lisa has served on numerous interprofessional committees, been instrumental in nutrition support policy development, and trained dietetic and medical students in clinical nutrition. She is thrilled to join the MS Coordinated Program in Dietetics to educate the next generation of registered dietitians!
COVID-19 Research Round-up

Ally R Avery, Siny Tsang, Edmund Y W Seto, Glen E Duncan
Differences in Stress and Anxiety Among Women With and Without Children in the Household During the Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Ally R Avery, Siny Tsang, Edmund Y W Seto, Glen E Duncan
Stress, anxiety and change in alcohol use during the COVID-19 pandemic: Findings among adult twin pairs

Glen E Duncan, Ally R Avery, Edmund Y W Seto, Siny Tsang
Perceived change in physical activity levels and mental health during COVID-19: Findings among adult twin pairs
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0237695

Glen E Duncan, Ally R Avery, Siny Tsang, Bethany D Williams, Edmund Seto
Changes in physical activity levels and mental health during COVID-19: Prospective findings among adult twin pairs:

Solmaz Amiri and Ofer Amram
Socioeconomic and Racial Inequities in Breast Cancer Screening During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Washington State
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/article-abstract/2780067

Solmaz Amiri, Ofer Amram, Robert Lutz, and Victoria Panwala
The impact of relaxation of methadone take-home protocols on treatment outcomes in the COVID-19 era

Solmaz Amiri, Ofer Amram, Robert Lutz, Pablo Monsivaisa, and Bhardwaj Rajan
Development of a vulnerability index for diagnosis with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in Washington State, USA
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7338982/

Siny Tsang, Ally R Avery, Edmund Y W Seto, Glen E Duncan
Is COVID-19 Keeping us Up at Night? Stress, Anxiety, and Sleep Among Adult Twins

Siny Tsang, Ally R Avery, Glen E Duncan
Fear and depression linked to COVID-19 exposure: A study of adult twins during the COVID-19 pandemic

Ofer Amram, Deepika Kubsad, and Sterling M. McPherson
Media Exposure and Substance Use Increase during COVID-19
https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/12/6318

Ofer Amram
The need for GIScience in mapping COVID-19
WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN BECOMING A REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST (RDN)?
I have loved cooking and food since I was a little kid, and with a long family history of working in the medical field I wanted to do something to help people with my love for food. This felt like the right way to combine the two! I did things a little differently by going to culinary school first, then got a BS in Culinary Nutrition at Johnson & Wales University. I knew I wanted to be an RD from the start and just took a different path to get here!

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE WSU MS CPD?
When I finished my undergraduate degree in Denver, Colorado, I wanted to find a program that was coordinated so I could get done with my RD internship at the same time as completing a master’s degree. I found that coordinated programs are not super common, and with the WSU campus in my hometown of Spokane, Washington, the program quickly became my first choice.

WERE YOU FROM WASHINGTON OR DID YOU MOVE TO THE STATE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL?
I was born and raised in Spokane and moved away to complete my undergraduate degree in Denver. While I enjoyed my time there, I was excited to have the opportunity to move back.

SHARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT PATH FOLLOWING GRADUATION
I had the opportunity for some pretty stellar work experience during college, and it really helped line me up to get a great job right after graduating. I actually interviewed for my first postgraduate job on the day of graduation: I drove straight from my interview to the convention center to walk in the ceremony. In that position, I worked at Freeman School District as the Nutrition Services Director. I was there for about 3 years, and I learned the USDA school meal program administration role.
as well as managed the school meal programs and nutrition services staff there. While there, I led the program when COVID-19 shut everything down and we needed to feed kids at home as well as through the process of bringing the students back to campus and having things slowly return to normal. I loved working at Freeman, but I accepted an offer to work for Spokane Public Schools as a nutrition services area supervisor in the spring of 2021. The position at Spokane Public Schools is more focused on menu writing, dietetics, federal regulations, and management. The district is much bigger than what I was used to (more than 30 times as many students), so it is a lot of the similar tasks on a much bigger scale.

When I started my journey to become an RD, my goal was to work with eating disorders. I did get to work at the Eating Recovery Center in Denver and The Emily Program in Spokane in a variety of roles. I really love working with that population, but as I started getting more experience in food service and food service management, many wonderful opportunities opened up and I am very happy with where I am now. I really feel like I can use all the pieces of my education and various work experiences and apply it my work now.

**HOW DO YOU USE YOUR ADDED EXPERTISE IN EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY TO WORK WITH CLIENTS OR PATIENTS, OR TO BETTER YOUR OWN WELLNESS?**

Working in foodservice management really limits the opportunities to counsel on exercise related topics, but I do use it to maintain my own wellness and the wellness of my loved ones. I plan to keep my EP-C certification and use it as much as possible through avenues like marketing health education.

**YOU VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE AS A PRECEPTOR FOR MS CPD STUDENTS IN THEIR FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT SUPERVISED PRACTICE ROTATION SOON AFTER YOU GRADUATED. WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART ABOUT BEING A PRECEPTOR?**

Being a preceptor has been so much fun! I love building relationship with future RDs and helping them see (hopefully) that foodservice is an option too! I love getting to share that with students as they contemplate where they will end up after school. I also feel like I have a special connection with students because I graduated somewhat recently from the program. It is nice to understand what they are experiencing and helps me build up their internship experience to be something they can hopefully get a lot out of.

**WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF BEING A PRECEPTOR?**

I think the most challenging part is wanting to spend so much time going over everything but making sure you are still able to keep up with your job! It might take me 15 minutes to do a task but taking the time to explain why it is important, or what role it plays and give a good amount of background, might take an hour. It has been a really good way for me to learn to prioritize and multitask. It seems like with every intern I precept, my systems get a little more organized.

**SHARE A FAVORITE MEMORY FROM YOUR TWO YEARS STUDYING ON THE WSU SPOKANE CAMPUS IN THE MS CPD.**

I made a really wonderful group of friends in my years at WSU. I don’t know if I could narrow it down to one specific memory, but I am very thankful for the wonderful people I still keep in touch with. It has been so exciting to see where these friends have wound up for jobs (all of us in different applications of practicing!) and to watch families grow.
Becoming a grandma for the first time is always something special, but when you are a cancer survivor and in the final year of your bachelor’s degree, it’s a life moment the whole department celebrates. Jeanine Leach was a senior in the BS in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology (BS NEP) program in her early 50s when she came in to chat one morning and shared the great news about the arrival of her granddaughter with her classmates and me.

Now a couple of years later, Jeanine is all set to graduate with her master’s degree. She moved directly from the BS NEP into the MS Coordinated Program in Dietetics (MS CPD) in Fall 2020. If you think finishing one degree and starting another in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic was tough, Jeanine will agree. Then she’ll clarify: more challenging than a pandemic erupting during her journey to earn her first two college degrees in her fifth decade, was learning to be science-minded.

With a natural affinity for the arts, Jeanine gravitated toward playing music at her church and teaching young musicians at a private school in Spokane—all while raising two daughters alongside her husband, Brad. The girls were still young when crippling pain and weakness stopped Jeanine in her tracks. Diagnosed with stage 4 Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, her doctors estimated she had a few months to live.

Treatment, including a blood stem cell transplant, helped Jeanine beat the odds. However, she endured several recurrences of the cancer over a 10-year span. In that time, Jeanine says she “got gritty.” Her desire to live, which is different from surviving, led her to research exercise and nutrition as a form of healing.

After several years of the lymphoma staying in remission, Jeanine wanted to understand more about the science
behind nutrition and exercise than her self-guided learning could offer. She also came to see that her natural strengths in relating to others could translate well into helping them overcome their own health challenges. She took the first steps toward becoming a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) at a local community college, where she earned top grades in the foundational classes needed to join the WSU NEP degree programs.

“The reality that skills are built and knowledge is learnable was huge for me,” Jeanine said of her experience in the classroom as an adult learner.

She’s used her hard-won grit to take on each assignment, each test, each class with a singular determination. Now, at nearly 20 years cancer-free and just a few months from taking the RDN credentialing exam, Jeanine is open to working in any of the three main practice areas—clinical nutrition, community nutrition, or food service management—because she has faith that her hard work will lead her to the right place.

“The generosity of donor support helps relieve some of the financial debt and stress that comes along with pursuing an advanced degree. I deeply appreciate the financial support and can assure that this assistance is an investment; the return being the influence and changes I hope to make in peoples’ lives and within the field of nutrition upon graduation.”

— Katherine Stutz
NEP student

Please consider a gift to the Nutrition and Exercise Physiology Excellence Fund by visiting medicine.wsu.edu/give/.
The Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology seeks to promote the health of individuals and communities through research, teaching, and service activities in human nutrition and exercise physiology, and the application of these sciences in academic, clinical, public health, and industry settings.

Support NEP with an end-of-year gift. Donations to the Excellence Fund support student scholarships and financial aid, student travel to professional conferences, new equipment, and faculty recruitment and retention.

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