

UNC GILLINGS SCHOOL OF GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOOL NEWS

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From the journals

Increasing access to family planning will play a central role in achieving U.N. targets for maternal health, eradication of poverty, education and gender equality, according to a major new Series on Family Planning published July 10 by *The Lancet*. **Herbert B. Peterson, MD**, Kenan Distinguished Professor and chair of the Department of Maternal and Child Health, played a key role in the series.

Sally C. Stearns, PhD, and **R. Gary Rozier, DDS, MPH**, professors of health policy and management, led a study of the cost-effectiveness of Into the Mouths of Babies, a Medicaid program operating in North Carolina since 2000. Results were published

online Aug. 27 in *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

Minors easily can purchase alcohol online as a result of poor age verification, according to a study co-authored by **Kurt Ribisl, PhD**, professor of health behavior. **Rebecca Williams, PhD**, research associate at UNC's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, was lead author of the study, published in the May *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

The rapid shift from nomadic life to modern-day culture in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) exposes the population to significant indoor air quality risks that can lead to

respiratory illness, according to a study led by epidemiology assistant professor **Karin Yeatts, PhD**. The study was published May 1 in *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Harsha Thirumurthy, PhD, assistant professor of health policy and management, co-authored an article in the May *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* suggesting that use of text messaging and other mobile phone applications may be an increasingly effective and cost-efficient means of improving health outcomes, especially in developing countries.

A rapid growth spurt in childhood could foretell obesity in adulthood, according to a study authored by 2012 health policy and management alumnus **Daniel Belsky, PhD**, and published in the June *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*.

A study led by alumna and adjunct assistant professor **Asheley Cockrell Skinner, PhD**, published online Sept. 10 in *Pediatrics*, finds a surprising difference in the eating habits of overweight children between ages 9 and 17 years, compared to those younger than 9. Younger overweight children consume more daily calories than do healthy-weight peers, but older overweight children consume fewer calories than peers.

A recent clinical trial testing a combination therapy for basal-like, or triple-negative, breast cancer demonstrates that a combination of two drugs with promising preclinical results is not as effective as researchers had



Dr. Anastasia Ivanova



Dr. Herbert Peterson



Dr. Kurt Ribisl



Dr. Asheley Skinner



Dr. Sally Stearns



Dr. H. Thirumurthy



Dr. Karin Yeatts



Dr. Cynthia Bulik



Dr. William Carpenter



Nabarun Dasgupta



Dr. Tania Desrosiers

hoped. **Anastasia Ivanova, PhD**, associate professor of biostatistics, was co-author of the study, published online June 4 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

New research finds a global decline in activity levels and predicts a continuing rise in inactivity in countries around the world. The study, conducted by **Barry Popkin, PhD**, W.R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of nutrition, and **Shu Wen Ng, PhD**, research assistant professor of nutrition, used extensive data from the 1960s onward to determine how people around the world spend their time and how they move in the course of their daily lives. Findings were published online June 14 in *Obesity Reviews*.

A study led by **Cynthia Bulik, PhD**, nutrition professor, Jordan Distinguished Professor of Eating Disorders (psychiatry), and director of the UNC Eating Disorders Program, found that age is no barrier to disordered eating. In women ages 50 and over, 3.5 percent report binge eating, nearly 8 percent report purging, and more than 70 percent are trying to lose weight. The study was published online June 21 in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*.

A diet based on American junk food could lead to more obesity-induced inflammation than a diet high in animal fat, according to a study led by **Liza Makowski, PhD**, assistant professor of nutrition, and published June 12 in the *Public Library of Science One (PLOS ONE)*. The study analyzed inflammatory responses in rats fed different diets: control diets, a lard-based high-fat diet and a “cafe-



Dr. Penny Gordon-Larsen



Dr. Michael Kosorok



Dr. Liza Makowski



Dr. Barry Popkin

teria junk-food” diet consisting of nutrient-poor snacks. Researchers found that the junk-food diet caused the most inflammation and dramatic metabolic changes.

Barry Popkin, PhD, W.R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of nutrition, and colleagues found that Chinese teenagers have a rate of diabetes nearly four times greater than their U.S. counterparts. The rise in diabetes incidence parallels increases in cardiovascular risk and is the result of a Chinese population that is growing increasingly overweight. Findings were published in the September *Obesity Reviews*.

More than three-quarters of Chinese adults have at least one risk factor for Type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease, according to new data in a long-term study led by nutrition associate professor **Penny Gordon-Larsen, PhD**, and published July 19 in the journal *Obesity*. Rates of hypertension, diabetes and triglycerides are particularly high, the study reports, even in the young and trim.

A customized weight loss program may cost less to implement than a traditional weight loss program, despite having similar

results, according to a study co-authored by **Deborah Tate, PhD**, associate professor of nutrition and health behavior, and published June 27 in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. Tate and colleagues describe a stepped-care program that begins with a low-intensity intervention increased or adjusted if weight loss milestones are not achieved as planned.

Christine Rini, PhD, associate professor of health behavior, and colleagues report that cancer rumors – such as the idea that one can get cancer from being in contact with a cancer patient – may affect health-related behaviors and medical decision-making. Results of the study were published online June 22 in the *Journal of Health Communication*.

A study published July 9 in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found that certain jobs held by men before they conceive a child may increase risk for various birth defects. Led by epidemiology researcher **Tania Desrosiers, PhD**, the study found certain birth abnormalities were associated with fathers who were artists, photographers and landscapers, among other professions.



Dr. Christine Rini



Dr. Ivan Rusyn



Dr. Jennifer Smith



Dr. Deborah Tate



Dr. Dianne Ward



Dr. Steven Zeisel

Data from national poison control centers may provide the best indicator of deaths by methadone overdose in the United States. Methadone is an opioid linked to 30 percent of deaths attributed to prescription painkiller overdose. **Nabarun Dasgupta**, epidemiology doctoral candidate, led the study, published July 19 in the journal *PLoS One*.

A study led by senior author **Jennifer Smith, PhD**, research associate professor of

epidemiology, strengthens the argument for human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination in men. Published June 18 in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, the study of 2,228 Kenyan men presents the first epidemiological data in men on the type-specific associations between prevalent HPV infections and future acquisition of other HPV types.

Research that compares the effectiveness of different cancer treatments should be

accelerated – and the findings promoted and accepted – according to a recent study by **William Carpenter, PhD**, assistant professor of health policy and management, **Michael Kosorok, PhD**, professor and chair of biostatistics, and **Til Stürmer, MD, PhD**, professor of epidemiology. Published online April 20 in *Cancer*, the study includes a literature review and interviews with 41 cancer comparative effectiveness research (CER) scientists.

Grants

A new \$3.3 million project to combat childhood obesity while helping owners of home-based child care facilities adopt healthy practices will be undertaken by a UNC-Duke partnership. Led by the School's **Dianne Ward, EdD**, professor of nutrition, and Duke's **Truls Ostbye, MD, PhD**, the “Healthy You, Healthy Home, Healthy Business” project will help child-care providers become healthy role models and establish environments that support good nutrition and physical activity. Ostbye is professor of community and family medicine.

UNC's Nutrition Research Institute (NRI), in Kannapolis, N.C., received a Grand Challenges Explorations award from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. **Steven H. Zeisel, MD, PhD**, Institute director and Kenan Distinguished University Professor of nutrition, will pursue a research project titled “Choline and Optimal Development.” Zeisel is credited with the discovery of choline's role as an essential nutrient, particularly for fetal and infant development.

The grant enables Zeisel and colleagues to design a diet intervention that can be implemented in The Gambia, where diet provides less than half of recommended adequate intake.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded a three-year, \$1.2 million grant for research conducted by the Carolina Center for Computational Toxicology (*comp-tox.unc.edu*). **Ivan Rusyn, MD, PhD**, professor of environmental sciences and engineering, is principal investigator for the project, “Assays, models and tools for NextGen safety assessments.” **Fred Wright, PhD**, professor of biostatistics, and **Alexander Tropsha, PhD**, professor and associate dean for research at UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, are project co-investigators.

Til Stürmer, MD, PhD, received a \$690,502 award from the nonprofit Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute for his project, “Methods to Increase Validity of Comparative Effectiveness Research in



Dr. Til Stürmer



Dr. Suzanne Maman

the Elderly.” He leads an interdisciplinary team to examine methodologies to compare effectiveness of elderly patients' treatment after myocardial infarction, especially in terms of their risk for re-infarction and hospitalization.

Suzanne Maman, PhD, associate professor of health behavior, received a five-year, \$2.6 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health for an innovative microfinance and health study in Tanzania.

School News continued on page 48

School News continued from page 25

Maman's team will offer small loans and leadership training to young men as a strategy to reduce HIV risk and partner violence.

Margaret (Peggy) Bentley, PhD, Carla Smith Chamblee Distinguished Professor of Global Nutrition, received a five-year grant of about \$3 million from The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Bentley's study, "Mothers and Others: Family-based Obesity Prevention for Infants and Toddlers," will develop and implement tailored nutrition interventions for mothers and families of non-Hispanic black infants, a group at high risk for pediatric obesity.

Ralph S. Baric, PhD, professor of epidemiology, and Mark T. Heise, PhD, associate professor of microbiology and immunology at UNC's medical school, will lead a five-



Dr. Margaret Bentley



Dr. Ralph Baric

year, \$21.4 million research study that could result in more effective treatments for life-threatening viral infections of the lungs and central nervous system, such as SARS, influenza and West Nile virus. The project's long-term aims are to identify key immune regulatory genes and networks that control disease severity, better understand how immune compartments "talk" to one another and determine disease outcomes after infection.

In other news ...



Dr. Leslie Lytle



Dr. Sonia Davis

School welcomes Lytle as health behavior chair

Leslie A. Lytle, PhD, former professor of epidemiology and community health in the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health, became chair of the School's health behavior department on Oct. 1. She holds a joint professorship in the School's nutrition department. Lytle received a bachelor's degree in medical dietetics (Pennsylvania State

University), master's degree in education (Purdue University) and doctoral degree in health education and health behavior (University of Michigan), completing post-doctoral training in cardiovascular health behavior in University of Minnesota's epidemiology division. Lytle succeeds Jo Anne Earp, ScD.

Davis takes on leadership of CSCC

Sonia Davis, DrPH, is the new director of the Collaborating Studies Coordinating Center (CSCC), based in the Department of Biostatistics. Davis received bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in biostatistics from UNC and previously was a senior director at Quintiles Inc. An adjunct faculty member in the department since 1995, she is now Professor of the Practice. Read more about the CSCC's illustrious history at tinyurl.com/CSCC-turns-40.

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45TH ANNUAL FOARD MEMORIAL LECTURE THURSDAY, APRIL 11

Registration opens February 2013.

Visit www.sph.unc.edu/foard.

TRIBUTE EVENTS TO HONOR

JO ANNE EARP, ScD, professor and former chair of Health Behavior, for four decades of service to UNC **FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, APRIL 12 AND 13**

For information about how you might participate, contact Steve Couch at (919) 966-0219 or spcouch@email.unc.edu.

UNC presents 18th annual summer videoconference on minority health

UNC's National Health Equity Research Webcast, formerly known as the Summer Public Health Research Institute and Videoconference on Minority Health, was held June 5. This year's topic was "Social determinants of health disparities: Moving the nation to care about social justice." Read more at www.sph.unc.edu/minority_health_project.