

THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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WASHINGTON, D.C., EVENT LOOKS TO THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S NUTRITION

Nutrition and policy experts delved into the issue of children's health at a national forum in Washington, D.C., on June 1 that was sponsored by the Friedman School and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Dean **Eileen Kennedy**, D.Sc., told a capacity crowd at the National Press Club, which included public health, anti-hunger and community food system advocates along with representatives from government and academia, that when it comes to strategies for preventing obesity, hunger and malnutrition in young people, we need a

"balance between the basic, clinical research and more applied, translational research."

"We really have a responsibility to use what we know at any point of time for action to improve nutrition," she said. "The evolving scientific literature...strongly suggests that there are proven interventions that are ready to be implemented or scaled up."

Both domestically and abroad, said Professor **Patrick Webb**, Ph.D., there are examples of successful practices that have improved children's health, from the reduction of severe undernutrition in Burkina Faso to increased food security in Brazil.

"There are far fewer people dying in famine and conflicts today than there were just 10 to 15 years ago," Webb said. "What we need to do is take those lessons and start applying them in a much bigger scale outside of major disasters."

He added: "There's progress on all fronts. We just have to capitalize on it, learn from it and spread it."

Among the proven strategies is the Shape Up Somerville program, led by **Christina Economos**, Ph.D., N96, holder of the New Balance Chair in Childhood Nutrition, whose community-encompassing approach to obesity prevention helped children in Somerville, Mass., gain less weight than their counterparts in other cities. Another panelist, Toni Liquori, Ed.D., has helped large school districts serve more locally grown, sustainably produced and healthful meals through a school meal reform initiative called School Food FOCUS.

"A year into it we've got the reach of about four million children participating with more than 20 school districts," she said.

As for timing, Linda Jo Doctor, program director at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, said she is seeing a lot of ingenuity in schools and communities across the country with a strong commitment to prevention and to improving school and community food environments.

"In northwest Iowa, youth are organizing across 18 school districts and demanding more healthful food options," she said. "In Chicago, parents are creating wellness teams, and teachers are now lining up in the school cafeteria to get tasty food, meals that are now freshly prepared in the school," she noted. "There are many innovations out there."

Other speakers included Julie Paradis, administrator for the Food and Nutrition Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics and epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine; Mary Story, Ph.D., professor of epidemiology and community health at the University of Minnesota; and Cathy Wotecki, Ph.D., global director of scientific affairs for Mars Inc.

GRADUATES URGED TO SHATTER CONVENTION

According The Friedman School awarded 58 master's degrees and 16 doctoral degrees at its 28th commencement ceremony, held in Cohen Auditorium on the Medford/Somerville campus on May 17.

In his address to the graduates, **Thomas E. Hughes**, N87, A10P, chief executive of the pharmaceutical company Zafgen Inc., urged the class to challenge conventional wisdom. Perhaps aware of the butterfly-filled stomachs in the audience, he used the history of ulcers as an example. For many years, physicians believed they were caused by stress, emotional instability and poor diet. Then, in the late 1970s, researchers Robin Warren and Barry Marshall theorized that a bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori* could be the culprit. When they presented their findings, "they were literally laughed off the stage," Hughes said. They turned out to be right, of course, and their research led to antibiotics as the standard treatment for ulcers.

"Now that they are Nobel Laureates, people don't laugh at Warren and Marshall anymore," Hughes said.

"Convention often gets shattered by breakthrough thinking. We should not be so smug in our knowledge," said Hughes, who received his doctorate from the Friedman School and is now a member of the school's Board of Overseers. "If something does not make sense—and it matters to you—don't let go of it. Never discount your insights. They are precious. Use feedback and criticism from others to hone your ideas so that they penetrate. Then find an audience and be heard in a loud voice."

Jessica Jones-Hughes, who completed the M.S. and Combined Dietetic Internship Program, said in her class address that she was struck by the "creativity, community and compassion"

that pervade the Friedman School. She said she discovered the “irreplaceable value of a supportive community” two years ago, when her apartment near campus burned down.

“Within days, my email box was overflowing with responses of donations that Tufts faculty, staff and students were offering. Everyone had something they wanted to give,” Jones-Hughes said. “It was beautifully overwhelming.”

Laura Catherine Ficker received the Rebecca Roubenoff Award for Excellence in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, which is awarded to a Frances Stern dietetic intern whose “academic excellence, clinical expertise and promise in the field of nutrition is of the highest caliber.” It was the seventeenth time the award has been given. **Holly Sedutto** received the inaugural Joan M. Bergstrom Student Award for Excellence in Global Nutrition, named for the former chair of the Board of Overseers who received her undergraduate degree in education from Tufts in 1962 and is a professor at Wheelock College and director of its Center for International Education, Leadership and Innovation.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Building an online community

Assistant Professor and Director of Distance Learning **Paul Giguere**, Ed.D., has received a grant from the Allen Foundation to develop a virtual community of practice (VCoP) for the Friedman School that will focus on nutrition-related information and knowledge sharing, best practices and research-driven strategies in policy and science. Using the school as a hub, the “community” will bring multiple groups together, including faculty, students and alumni, industry and government, allied professionals, and others interested in nutrition. The VCoP will ultimately support a wide range of activities, including networking, continuing education, information sharing and project or proposal planning and implementation.

Improving food-aid programs

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Food for Peace program has awarded a grant of approximately \$1.5 million to the Friedman School to help improve the quality of its food-aid operations. The Food for Peace program provides food to orphans and



vulnerable children, undernourished pregnant and lactating women, students in grades K-8, food-insecure adolescents and adults, and persons living with HIV/AIDS throughout the developing world. Professor **Patrick Webb**, Ph.D., and Professor **Beatrice Rogers**, Ph.D., and their collaborators will examine the nutritional needs of these populations and the nutrition quality of commodities currently used to meet those needs.

They will look at vitamin and mineral enrichment and fortification technologies and methods for the delivery of micronutrients in the form of supplements or powders.

In photo above, from left: Patrick Webb; Fanfan Han, N05, with the Chinese CDC; Laura Rowe, N07, MPH07, associate director of Project Healthy Children, a private voluntary organization based in Newton, Mass.; Beatrice Rogers; Tom Schaetzel, N06, director of the Infant and Young Child Nutrition Project, based in Washington D.C.; Elizabeth Lundeen, N10, who is enrolled in the school's Ras Al Khaimah master's degree program; and Akoto Osei, N04, who works with Helen Keller International in Cambodia. Not pictured but also present was Juliet Aphane, N86, who works for the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

To gain input for their project, Webb and Rogers organized a satellite meeting in May at the second international Micronutrient Forum in Beijing, where they met a number of Friedman School students and graduates.

New reports from the Feinstein International Center

Children who live in the Horn of Africa, where many families rely on livestock and subsistence farming for their livelihoods, are often viewed as some of the most nutritionally vulnerable people in the world. When rains in this arid region fail and rates of acute malnutrition peak, the dominant response from the international community is to deliver large quantities of food aid. Yet there is still little understanding of the causes of malnutrition and which interventions are best for improving the health and nutritional status of children. A new literature review from the Feinstein International Center investigates how to measure malnutrition in these pastoralist settings, its causes and key interventions, including the role of breastfeeding and access to animal milk in improving the nutritional status of children.

Also new from the Feinstein International Center is "Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards" (available as a free PDF download at <http://www.livestock-emergency.net>), which addresses the need to protect and rebuild livestock assets, a crucial component of people's livelihoods, when humanitarian emergencies arise.

You can also download both "Milk Matters: A Literature Review of Pastoralist Nutrition and Programming Responses" and "Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards" from the Feinstein's web site: <http://fic.tufts.edu>

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Professor **Lynne Ausman**, D.Sc., was named a recipient of one of this year's Tufts Distinction Awards. She received the Unsung Hero Award, which recognizes employees who demonstrate a willingness to do whatever needs to be done on the job. Award winners are "consummate team players who contribute to the success of Tufts in ways that may not always be readily apparent." She received the award at a ceremony at Behrakis Auditorium in the Jaharis Center on June 3.

Melissa Bailey, a doctoral student in the Agriculture, Food and Environment Program, has been named a winner of the 2008-09 Dow Sustainability Innovation Student Challenge, which recognizes innovative ideas that target global sustainability challenges. Bailey's project is titled "Farm Conservation Policy in a Concentrating Agricultural Industry: Evaluation and Development of a Framework for Sustainable Livestock Production," research that will focus on water quality and manure management issues. Bailey earned an M.S. in animals and public policy from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts in 2003.

Professor **Sarah Booth**, Ph.D., has been appointed associate director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA), where she is also director of the Vitamin K Laboratory. She is well known for her research on vitamin K, with her laboratory recognized as one of the leading research groups on this subject.

Associate Professor **Edward Saltzman**, M.D., was named chair of the Friedman School's Department of Nutrition Sciences. Saltzman, an associate professor of medicine at Tufts School of Medicine, is also a scientist in the Energy Metabolism Laboratory of the HNRCA, where his research has focused on the role of diet composition in the regulation of energy metabolism.

Adjunct Professor **Johanna Seddon**, M.D., was named a distinguished Gold Fellow by the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology. Seddon, a professor of ophthalmology at Tufts School of Medicine, is among the first group of members recognized for their accomplishments, leadership and contributions to the association. She discovered the relationship between nutritional factors and age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness, and has discovered four new genetic variants associated with this increasing cause of vision loss.

Assistant Professor **Dayong Wu**, Ph.D., has been appointed associate director of the Nutritional Immunology Laboratory at the HNRCA.

HERE & THERE

Many low-income neighborhoods in the United States lack access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables. Residents in these so-called "food deserts" rely on neighborhood corner stores and fast-food chains as their main sources of food. But, as **Jessica Ilyse Smith**, N09, reported for the Living on Earth radio program, a number of New York City programs are working to close the food gap by bringing healthy foods close to home.

FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

An article written for the *Health Magazine* website that appeared on CNN.com included comments from Assistant Professor **Elizabeth Johnson**, Ph.D., and Adjunct Professor **Johanna Seddon**, M.D., who responded to results of a new study that found that omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration. Johnson said it makes sense that omega-3s would be helpful in saving your eyesight, because nerve tissue and the retinas contain high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, especially DHA. Seddon said she recommends to her patients "that they consume a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids and fish, especially salmon, sardines and mackerel, as well as nuts and green, leafy vegetables."

In a letter to the editor published in the *New York Times*, Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., applauded an op-ed about the need to promote cooking skills. "As our schools provide basic information about tobacco, alcohol and drugs, so they should provide basic information about food preparation," Lichtenstein wrote. "We live in an obesigenic environment that confounds even the best efforts to make healthy choices. Let's arm children with the skills they need to navigate through successfully."

Research by Professor **Joel Mason**, M.D., on folic acid and cancer risk was highlighted in articles in both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Associate Press*. "For the last 20 years, I've been publishing papers and doing research that demonstrates that if you don't get enough folate, you have a higher risk for several types of cancer," he said. "More recently, what has

emerged is that it's not as simple of a relationship as we thought....We're presented with this horrible dilemma that on the one hand, taking ample quantities of folate in the diet is helpful. On the other hand, it might be accelerating the risk of developing certain cancers in certain people."

Professor **Mohsen Meydani**, D.V.M., Ph.D., led a team at the HNRCA's Vascular Biology Laboratory that found that curcumin, the main polyphenol in turmeric, appears to suppress fat tissue growth in mice that eat high-fat diets. The results were reported on dozens of newspaper Internet sites, including the timesonline.com and latimes.com.

Professor **Susan Roberts**, Ph.D., director of the Energy Metabolism Laboratory at the HNRCA, was the sole expert during a 30-minute segment of National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation*. She discussed weight issues and answered listener questions about metabolism and weight management.

Professor **Allen Taylor**, Ph.D., was featured in the May cover story of the Center for Science in the Public Interest's *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, commenting on refined carbohydrates and their contributions to macular degeneration and cataracts. "I believe that the cells are repeatedly stressed by having glucose loads that they just can't metabolize normally," he said. "The proteins in the cells are being modified by the sugar or other metabolites that don't get broken down."

MAKE A GIFT TO THE FRIEDMAN SCHOOL

We encourage you to make a donation to the Friedman School's annual fund before June 30 and join nearly 2,000 donors who are committed to improving the nutritional well-being of people worldwide. Through your generosity, you will provide needed support for student financial aid, research, student internships and other school priorities.

To make a gift securely online, go to <http://nutrition.tufts.edu/givenow>. For more information on how your philanthropy can assist the school, contact the Advancement Office at 617.636.2940 or [click here](#).