

Notable News

DR. LISA BODNAR NEW VICE-CHAIR FOR RESEARCH

We congratulate Dr. Lisa Bodnar, an associate professor of epidemiology, with tenure, who has been appointed as Vice-Chair for Research in the department of epidemiology. Dr. Anne Newman, chair of the department of epidemiology made this announcement. Dr. Bodnar holds a secondary appointment in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences. Dr. Bodnar's research addresses the impact of maternal nutrition on birth outcomes. She has contributed her experience to several national panels that set guidelines for nutrition during pregnancy, including the US Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services Pregnancy Working Group that will provide evidence for the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Institute of Medicine Committee to Reevaluate Pregnancy Weight Gain Guidelines. She has published over 100 articles and 5 book chapters. She currently serves as Principal Investigator for two National Institutes of Health R01 grants regarding weight gain during pregnancy. Dr. Bodnar received the Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award in 2013, and was the Mary Lewis Endowed Lecturer at Michigan State University Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition last year. She is an Associate Editor of the American Journal of Epidemiology and a member of the Executive Committee of the Society of Epidemiology Research.



Dr. Lisa Bodnar



Dr. Andrea Rosso

NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND COGNITIVE FUNCTION IN LATE LIFE

In analyses of 3,595 adults in their seventies, it was found that neighborhood socioeconomic status was associated with advanced cognitive aging and that these findings were not explained by differences in individual socioeconomic status. Dr. Andrea Rosso, lead author of this report stated that the association was stronger in black adults, amounting to 6 years of additional cognitive aging for those in the neighborhoods with the lowest socioeconomic status compared to those with the highest. In older white adults, being in the neighborhoods with the lowest compared to the highest socioeconomic status was equivalent to 1 additional year of cognitive aging. There was no difference in rate of decline in cognitive status, indicating that these differences likely arise earlier in life. The causes could be related to differences in lifetime health behaviors, poorer quality of institutional resources such as schools, or increased levels of stress in the neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic status. These results add to the growing body of research demonstrating the negative associations of poverty, at the level of both the individual and the neighborhood, with function, health, and well-being. Co-authors include Dr. Caterina Rosano and Dr. Karen Matthews. [read more from the American Journal of Epidemiology](#)

*Notable News continued***ADULTS AT RISK FOR DIABETES DOUBLE ACTIVITY LEVELS THROUGH HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROGRAM**

Adults at risk for type 2 diabetes or heart disease or both can substantially increase their physical activity levels through participating in a lifestyle intervention program developed at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health for use in community-settings, such as senior centers or worksites. Previous studies have demonstrated that such programs decrease weight and reduce diabetes risk, but this NIH-funded evaluation is one of the first to document that these programs also result in significant increases in the participants' physical activity levels. The results were reported in the June issue of the *Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine*, coinciding with the organization's 62nd annual meeting in Boston, the largest sports medicine and exercise meeting in the world. "This is one of the few programs of its kind to report on physical activity-related outcomes in a large group and the only known diabetes prevention healthy lifestyle program to examine the effect of season and weather on changes in physical activity levels," said senior author Andrea Kriska, Ph.D., professor in Pitt Public Health's Department of Epidemiology and principal investigator of the NIH study. [*read more from the American College of Sports Medicine*](#)



Dr. Andrea Kriska



Dr. Rebecca Thurston

CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS PREDISPOSE WOMEN TO DIFFERENT HOT FLASH PATTERNS

In a press release that was picked up by dozens of news outlets nationwide, a report from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN) found that most women will get hot flashes or night sweats at some point in life. However, when these symptoms occur and how long they last can vary dramatically among women. New findings show that women fit into four distinct groups when it comes to getting hot flashes and night sweats, with potential ramifications for therapy and prevention of future health conditions, according to the research led by the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. The epidemiological investigation followed hundreds of women for an average of 15 years and identified characteristics that predisposed them to certain trajectories for getting hot flashes and night sweats-collectively known as "vasomotor symptoms." The findings were published in the July 13 issue of *Menopause: The Journal of the North American Menopause Society* and were funded by the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Rebecca Thurston, a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh who holds a secondary appointment in the department of epidemiology is lead author. Additional authors are Dr. Maria Brooks, Dr. Samar El Khoudary, Dr. Joyce Bromberger, and Dr. Kristine Ruppert. [*read more from the New York Times*](#)

*Notable News continued***NEW GRANT FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE IN JAPAN**

A new NIH RF1 has been awarded to Dr. Akira Sekikawa, associate professor of epidemiology, to study alzheimer's disease in Japan. 200 Japanese men and women with normal cognition will be enrolled from the Suita Study- a population-based cohort study to look at amyloid deposition in PiB PET and brain magnetic resonance imaging, which will be read at the University of Pittsburgh. The findings of this study may have major impact on research into the etiology and potentially the prevention of alzheimer's disease.



Dr. Akira Sekikawa



photo by Darrell Sapp/Post Gazette

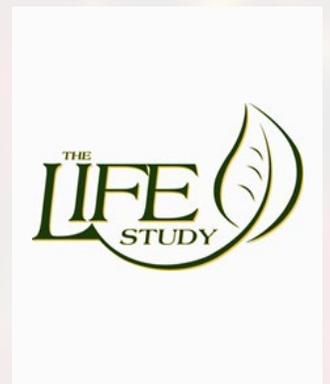
MOVE-UP PITTSBURGH RECEIVES LOCAL PR

Several participants in the MOVE-UP study were highlighted in a Pittsburgh Post Gazette article to feature the interventions that are being tested at the Prevention Research Center. "The goal is for people to lose weight in as healthy a way as possible. So it's not simply about not eating — It's about a healthy lifestyle," said Dr. Anne Newman, chair of the department of epidemiology, director of Pitt's Center for Aging and Population Health and principal investigator for the study. "Studies that have been done on weight management over the long term have shown [there to be] good health and function benefits." Dr. Mehran Massoudi, department alumnus, was also quoted in the article in his role as director of the Prevention Research Centers program of the Centers for Disease Control.

read more from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette

MODERATE EXERCISE MAY NOT CUT HEART ATTACK RISK FOR ELDERLY

For people over age 70, starting a twice-weekly walking program didn't lower the odds of heart attack or stroke over the next two years in a U.S. study. "We had hoped to see a trend for reduced heart disease events, given the strong positive finding for reduced mobility disability, previously published in JAMA," said lead author Dr. Anne B. Newman, director of the University of Pittsburgh Center for Aging and Population Health and chair of the department of epidemiology. But in this study there was no difference between doing the physical activity and just receiving health education, Newman told Reuters Health by email. *read more from Fox News Health*



*Notable News continued***VAST MAJORITY OF GUNS RECOVERED BY POLICE
NOT CARRIED BY LEGAL OWNERS**

Nearly 80 percent of perpetrators carrying a gun recovered by Pittsburgh Police were not the lawful owners, a strong indication that theft and trafficking are significant sources of firearms involved in crimes in southwest Pennsylvania, a new Pitt Public Health analysis reveals. “Homicide by firearms continues to rank among the leading causes of death for young people in the U.S.,” said lead author Dr. Anthony Fabio, assistant professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health. “Given the pandemic threat in the United States of firearm violence, immediate improvement in firearm surveillance is needed to save lives. Dr. Fabio and his co-authors recommend that more efforts be made to educate the public about safe storage of firearms and injury prevention, as well as encourage ongoing, systemic collaboration between public health and law enforcement experts to better understand and reduce violent crime and improve access to data collection on firearms.” The results are published in the journal *Social Medicine* and funded by the former Falk Foundation. [read more from Pitt Health Sciences](#)



Dr. Anthony Fabio



Dr. Anne Newman

**DR. ANNE NEWMAN NAMED AS GSA'S NEXT
MEDICAL SCIENCES JOURNAL EDITOR**

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) — the country's largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to the field of aging — has named Anne B. Newman, MD, MPH, Chair of the department of epidemiology, as the next medical sciences editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*, effective January 2017. The *Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences* is published by Oxford Journals on behalf of GSA. Its medical sciences section contains peer-reviewed articles representing the full range of medical sciences pertaining to aging, including basic medical science, clinical epidemiology, clinical research, and health services research for professions such as medicine, dentistry, allied health sciences, and nursing. It also publishes articles on research pertinent to human biology and disease. “Our understanding of the aging process has accelerated in recent years such that it is now possible to translate the basic biology of aging to human studies and test new interventions to help people live healthy, productive lives well into old age,” Newman said. “I’m honored to be named editor of this prestigious journal, which continues to shed light on myriad discoveries and advancements in the field of gerontology.”

Alumni Corner

DR. EDWARD GREGG AWARDED ADA 2016 KELLY WEST AWARD

For his extensive dedication to the field of diabetes epidemiology, Dr. Edward Gregg (PhD '96), was recognized by the American Diabetes Association as their 2016 Kelly West Award recipient. Given in memory of Kelly West, widely regarded as the “father of diabetes epidemiology,” this award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the field. Gregg is currently Chief of the Epidemiology and Statistics Branch in the Division of Diabetes Translation at the CDC where he oversees the National Diabetes Surveillance system. This prestigious honor is also held by Dr. Ronald LaPorte, and Dr. Trevor Orchard, Distinguished Professor of epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh. Gregg is also the 2012 recipient of the Pitt Public Health Distinguished Alumni Award for Research. [*read more from the American Diabetes Association*](#)



Dr. Edward Gregg



Dr. Janice Zgibor

DR. JANICE ZGIBOR NAMED A FELLOW BY ACE

Dr. Janice Zgibor, (MPH '97, PhD '99) was recently named a Fellow by the American College of Epidemiology (ACE). The ACE is an organization of epidemiologists that serves the interests of the profession and its members through advocating for issues pertinent to epidemiology and this appointment recognizes Dr. Zgibor's significant and sustained contributions to the field. Dr. Zgibor moved to Tampa, Florida in October 2015, and is an Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Pharmacy in the College of Public Health at the University of South Florida, the Director of the Doctoral Program in Epidemiology and continues her affiliation with Pitt Public Health as an adjunct associate professor. Her current research is looking at the role of pre-diabetes and cardiovascular outcomes in several cohort studies. Additionally, she is developing a lifestyle intervention for new mothers in disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Tampa Bay area. These mothers are experiencing many health challenges including obesity, diabetes, and hypertension which places them at high risk for other chronic diseases and complications in future pregnancies. Dr. Zgibor is developing courses in social epidemiology, practical issues in the implementation of epidemiologic studies, and pharmacoepidemiology.



Student Corner

DOCTORAL STUDENT PUSHES RESEARCH BOUNDARIES WHILE SEEKING NEW PATHWAYS FOR PROTECTING COGNITIVE HEALTH

The probability is high that many today know someone who is suffering from a form of cognitive impairment, since adults aged 75 and older comprise one of the fastest growing population segments. Prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is predicted to increase accordingly. Beth Shaaban, a third year PhD student in epidemiology, is collaborating with researchers who are breaking new ground in the battle to protect the health of this burgeoning yet fragile cohort. She was delighted to receive funding in the form of a training grant (NIH F31) award to provide continued support for her project entitled, "Pathways of Beneficial Effects of a Physical Activity Intervention on Hippocampal Atrophy Among Older Adults". Beth's faculty mentor and academic advisor is Dr. Caterina Rosano, professor of epidemiology. Hippocampal atrophy is associated with transition to Alzheimer's disease; hence, it could become a prevention focus. Physical activity has been shown to slow or reverse this atrophy. To date, however, studies have primarily focused on healthy, "younger" elderly (less than 70-75).

"Her efforts could contribute to development of life-changing, targeted interventions through growth factor modification . . ."

Beth's goal is to turn the spotlight to the very old (over 75), who often experience overlapping chronic health conditions and are most at risk. She hypothesizes that exposure to long-term moderate physical activity acts through blood (growth) factors to increase hippocampal gray matter volume and small vessel density. Her efforts could contribute to development of life-changing, targeted interventions through growth factor modification. In the long term, Beth envisions leveraging her research experience and professional networks while managing her own lab as a principal investigator at a top research university. The department looks forward to following where research and career pathways take this innovative and energetic student!

Appointments

DR. JANE CAULEY

Distinguished Professor

DR. BRENDA DIERGAARDE

Associate Professor

DR. JEAN NACHEGA

Associate Professor, with tenure

Grants

DR. MARIA BROOKS

New NIH U01 “Myocardial Ischemia and Transfusion (MINT) – DCC”

DR. CATHERINE HAGGERTY

New NIH R21 “Mycoplasma genitalium, differentiated Ureaplasma species, and pregnancy outcomes”

DR. ANDI ROSSO

New NIH K01 “Environmental Challenges and the Aging Brain: Implications for Community Mobility”

DR. AKIRA SEKIKAWA

New NIH RF1 “Omega-3, isoflavones & amyloid deposition in cognitively normal elderly Japanese”

DR. EVELYN TALBOTT

New contract CDC grant “Relationship between air pollution and asthma with other acute respiratory hospitalizations/emergency department visits in Pennsylvania”

Submit News to the Epidemiology Newsletter

If you have a story, award or other milestone you would like to share, please email Frani Averbach at averbachf@edc.pitt.edu with your submission.



Welcome, new Pitt Public Health Students!