

Newsletter

March 2009



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From the President of GADA.....

Dear Colleagues:

Happy National Nutrition Month! I hope that this note finds you healthy and happy. GADA is celebrating NNM with several exciting opportunities. The month started with our participation in the Hunger Walk to benefit The Atlanta Community Food Bank. GADA volunteers and donors raised more than \$1,400 to provide food for the hungry right here in Georgia. The second annual Registered Dietitian Day was celebrated in fine fashion with a wine tasting and dinner on the Marietta Square. Fun was had by all! Join fellow dietitians and volunteers for the Diabetes Expo on March 21 and mark your calendars for a special meeting on Disordered Eating on April 13 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. By its end, March will truly have been a month of celebrating nutrition. We are still looking for nominees for the 2009-2010 GADA Board of Directors. For more information, contact any member of the Board. This is a great opportunity for networking, leadership, and personal growth. There's still much to come in this membership year, so stay involved!

Best Regards,

Sherry

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Upcoming Educational Events



**Folic Acid Fortification Policy:
The intended and the unintended
public health benefits**

Monday, March 23, 2009
7:30 pm - 9:00 pm
480/485 University Center
Georgia State University
(www.gsu.edu)

Presentations by:
Joe Mulinare, MD, MSPH
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Vijay Ganji, PhD, RD
Division of Nutrition
Georgia State University

Refreshments will be served.



**2009 College Sports Dietitian
Seminar**

May 11—May 13, 2009
Nashville Airport Marriott
Nashville, TN

For more information, visit:
<http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Invitation.aspx?e=d3cbcd15-263e-402d-97f2-e84dd8a3a7db>



Public Policy and the New Healthcare Administration

What is in store for dietitians?

With the recent election of President Barack Obama, there has been a lot of buzz about the future of healthcare. What will the role of dietitians be in the years to come? We have gathered opinions from both healthcare professionals and nutrition students to help provide some insight into the topic. The new acting head of the CDC, Dr. Richard Besser and GSU public policy professor, Mr. Russ Toal have graciously provided some thoughts on public policy and the current healthcare administration. We have also included in this issue a few helpful tips on how we get involved in public policy and how we can go about gathering more information about public policy issues. We hope you find this month's newsletter both informative and interesting.

Interviews with Dr. Richard Besser, Acting Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Acting Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and with Mr. Russ Toal, M.P.H., Associate Professor, Georgia State University, Institute of Public Health

How will the proposed healthcare strategies or the current administration have an impact on healthcare over the next 5 - 10 years?

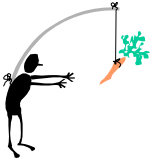
Besser: It's always difficult to assess where healthcare will be in the future. But I do see a future of unprecedented opportunity for CDC and other health care groups to make strategic investments, to demonstrate our public health impact, and to improve public health for the future.

This whole process gives us a chance to reframe the role and value of public health in the health system—it can reshape the way we do business, and it forces us to think about what we do and what we can do better in creating a 21st century public health system. This is an opportunity to improve health in visionary ways, which can transform the way we do business now and in the future. I believe that the agency process for achieving our fiscal year goals will benefit from the work we are doing now to develop solid ways to generate ideas for potential investments, engage partners and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) colleagues in crystallizing and prioritizing those ideas, and ultimately get general support.

Toal: The current administration is looking to increase health prevention and maintenance instead of focusing solely on treatment. This will lead to expanded health services at local levels with an increase in community centers and health care centers. The recent stimulus package has allotted half a billion dollars for the task. This could lead to a dramatic increase of jobs in the health profession and an increase in quality of care.

What roles do nutrition and diet have in the proposed healthcare plans and in funding for research and program practice?

Besser: I believe there will always be a role for the importance of nutrition and diet as it relays to wellness and prevention. I know it is no revelation for those in public health to realize the potential chronic health impact of obesity. That's why two of the Healthy People 2010 national health objectives are (1) to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adults to less than 15%



and (2) to reduce the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents to less than 5%. Recognizing the benefits of reducing obesity is certainly a challenge outside of the public health environment but as CDC and others continue to promote the advantages of healthy living and documenting the problem and possible solutions through research, the benefits will move forward.

Toal: The role of nutrition and diet in the proposed healthcare plans is two fold. First, providing education on healthy eating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is essential. With this education, obesity can be controlled. The second role would be active prevention of chronic diseases where nutrition and diet play a key role.

Regarding research and program practice, nutrition and diet can look into the prevention of cancer and the reduction of obesity.

There is a lot to learn about the integration of nutrition as well. School programs of course are essential, but we also need to focus on the rapid growth of the elderly population with the baby boomers aging.

What do you think is in store for us in the next four years, both in the public health aspect and for dietitians? What are some of the positive changes that will affect dietitians? With the new stimulus package money budgeted to the CDC, what areas will be your priorities? Are there any programs that are being planned regarding health and wellness? What new or expanded nutrition related health and wellness initiatives and programs do you anticipate funding?

Besser: There are tremendous opportunities with the economic stimulus package and the next federal budget which President Barack Obama has put forth. There is indeed a recognition of the role of wellness and prevention. Tremendous resources may be coming to public health. We have assembled assessment teams at CDC to be sure we put to offer suggestions to the Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services. We would like our projects and programs to accomplish two objectives—stimulate the economy to put people to work, and have an impact on the health of people everywhere. More information will be coming forward on programs. As always with CDC, expanding and developing partnerships is always key to accomplish our public health goals. We certainly will work with our traditional partners like state health departments, etc., but we also have room for new partners.

What do you think is in store for us in the next four years, both in the public health aspect and for dietitians? What are some of the positive changes that will affect dietitians?

Toal: In the next four years we will have more jobs in the health care sector with an increase in dietitians. Hopefully, there will be more integration within the health care professions.

You must be very excited that President Obama said "we will restore science to its rightful place", how will you ensure that the CDC will go back to its scientific roots?

Besser: It was very exciting to hear President Obama say that science will have a seat at the policy table. It's evident that the signals are there that science is respected and will be heard. One of my priorities as acting CDC director is to assure that the excellent work that occurs each day around science and communication of our efforts continues.

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing healthcare professionals today?

Besser: The challenges are enormous and varied. There is an enormous challenge in terms of health and health disparities. For so many diseases, we know how they can be prevented and how



health can be promoted and we need to move forward on these critical programs. So one huge challenge is for the dollars and investment in prevention. We need resources to combat chronic diseases, to prevent injury, to promote workforce safety.

As the nation faces a struggling economy and the challenge of political transition, it is critically important that we work with the new administration to understand their priorities to ensure the success of our priorities. As we move forward, we face the challenge of accountability, of ensuring that every dollar we spend is a dollar well spent.

We also face the challenge of transparency, of engendering trust and making sure that we use our nation's resources appropriately. We need to ensure that science is at the table when policies are being crafted. We need to ensure we have an evidence-base for the programs and priorities we are putting forward.

There is also the challenge of complacency, of feeling that some of the threats we have faced over the past eight years are behind us. We need to work on the urgent realities and urgent threats and we need to be sure that the policymakers are aware that these urgent realities and urgent threats need to be addressed.

Toal: In the next four years we will have more jobs in the health care sector with an increase in dietitians. Hopefully, there will be more integration within the health care professions.

How do you believe healthcare professionals can make this challenge an accomplishment?

Besser: Start by recognizing and acknowledging the challenges that exist and then begin to seek solutions.

Toal: By providing incentives for people who are actively promoting their own health. We need to start rewarding people who are taking action to lead healthy lifestyles instead of charging them extra to compensate for the unhealthy.

If you could tell the members of the Greater Atlanta Dietetic Association anything regarding their role in public policy and how they can make a difference right now, what would it be?

Besser: To continue what they are doing because it is more than likely making a difference. But then to look beyond current practice to see what else can be done or if it could be done in an even more effective way.

Toal: The role of nutrition and dietetics is very important in public health as they can make a lot of difference by being promoters of preventive care. Dietitians should promote themselves and get involved in the community.

As someone in the public health field who actively promotes healthcare, what will you do personally to help make a beneficial change?

Toal: As President of the Georgia Health Association, I want to get adequate funding for various projects. Secondly, I want to deal with the governor's proposed reorganization of healthcare resources and make sure that local health departments have the autonomy to make changes and execute public health policies.



What is the best way to get more information about health policy and how to start getting involved?

Besser: Definitely keeping an attentive eye to what is being proposed and the impact the proposal may have on your particular health practice area. Websites can be a good start along with publications like this one and interacting with colleagues and professional organizations.

Toal: This can be accomplished by interning or being a member of Georgia Public Health Association. Nutritionists and dietitians can become advocates to educate the general population on the importance of diet and nutrition while also engaging themselves in civic or local welfare programs to make a positive change. As nutritionists and dieticians, they can make sure that civil authorities like congressmen and senators are aware of various issues which are affecting the general public and thus be a voice for the common people.

What is your ultimate goal as a public health professional?

Besser: I can provide my latest goal. CDC's greatest strength is its people, its workforce, and their dedication and commitment to their mission. We are the world's premier health agency and as acting director I am committed to ensuring that our people have what it takes to accomplish that mission and to remain the world's premier health agency.

Toal: My ultimate goal as a public health professional would be to see that people have equal opportunities to be healthy; they can survive in a healthy environment with equal living opportunities in the society.

What single moment in your career has been the most noteworthy?

Besser: Aside from the obvious, recently being named acting CDC Director, I would say one of the highlights of my career was being the founder and medical director of Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work, a program promoting the appropriate use of antibiotics. This program works through partners to change the way in which these essential drugs are used, hopefully reducing the spread of antimicrobial resistance. Through this work I have learned the importance of partnership, teamwork, and accountability. We have been able to document a 40 percent decline in antibiotic use for children over the past decade. While this is not directly attributable to our campaign, it does demonstrate the ability of well-designed public health programs to change practice."

Toal: The single moment in my career that has been the most noteworthy would be the creation of Indigent Care Trust Fund. This fund provides Medicaid eligibility and services, support rural and other health care providers, primarily hospitals, which serve the medically indigent, and fund primary health care programs for medically indigent Georgians. The ICTF is an umbrella program which contains the Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program, nursing home provider fees, Care Management Organization (CMO) Quality Assessment Fees; Breast Cancer Tag Fees, ambulance rates and other uninsured/indigent initiatives. With ICTF funding, even uninsured people who do not qualify for Medicaid may receive health care from participating hospitals. This fund has also been a model for other states.



Special thanks to Mary Crommelin, GSU graduate CP student, for conducting these interviews.

Comments from Georgia State University Graduate Students

For the past 60 years, the CDC has worked on improving the quality of life for the American people. The theme of this year's State of CDC report is, "Healthy People in a Healthy World—Through Prevention." This, coupled with the general population's increase of interest and awareness on the importance of disease prevention through nutrition, implies a budding market for dietitians. In recent years, health insurance companies have shown interest in health prevention and some cover 100% of expenses arising from preventative care. I believe this trend will continue to grow especially with the support of the new administration. The Obama-Biden plan aims not only to provide affordable, accessible health care for all Americans but also to give patients the power to make health care decisions with their doctors, instead of being blocked by insurance companies. Since the general public is developing an awareness of the nutritional importance, they will continue to increase their requests to visit a dietitian. Through research and community practice, the nutrition professional community has and will continue to promote healthy eating behaviors and healthy lifestyles that will continue to improve the quality of life of the community.

~ Sally Vanegas

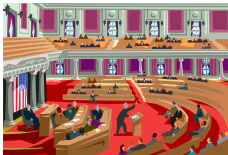
Nutrition is one of the key determinants of human health. The importance of nutrition is now widely accepted, and there are many studies which show the association between nutrient intake and both mortality and morbidity. Poor diet is one of the main causes of many illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, hypertension and cancer. Recent phenomena are only making the situation worse; for example, the rise in obesity, especially in children and adolescents, and changes in eating habits in favor of mass catering and pre-prepared foods.

It is essential to integrate nutrition planning and public health policies. This can be accomplished via an establishment of a consistent nutrition policy, an action plan for nutrition, and recommendations for dietary guidelines. It is important that nutritional health is taken into account when drawing up and implementing any relevant community policies. It is also important to develop tools for assessing the impact of other community policies on nutritional health. We need to continue to develop tools to monitor nutritional health and its determinants in order to obtain comparable data and ensure regular assessment of these data. This action should complement the work of the Member States, in particular by drawing on their existing tools. Thus, promotion of regular exchanges of experience in this field is essential for development. This will lead to scientific evidence in the area of nutritional health in order to update the national and local dietary guidelines and the information given to consumers. The policies need to support research into the links between health and nutrition, into diet-related diseases, into an understanding of eating and dietary habits and the impact of health and nutrition policies. It is important to examine the possibility of conducting projects to promote healthy eating and considering the use of new information technologies to improve the information available to players in this sector and the public

Nutrition progress during the next decade will require the community to confront a changed environment and several key challenges, namely the macro and micro planning, the multi sectoral approach, integration with agricultural and health planning, nutrition interventions cost benefit analyses, and information systems evaluation, management and organization. There is a need to be realistic about the tenacity of the problem and the multiple barriers to the implementation of nutrition policies.

~ Payal Arora

~ We want to thank Dr. Richard Besser and Mr. Russ Toal for donating their time and valuable opinions to Georgia State University graduate students for this newsletter ~



How Do I Get Involved??

With the new administration in action, now is the time for everyone to learn about what is going on and to get involved. Below are some tips on where you can find information and how you can speak your mind!

- To check out the proposed health care agenda for President Obama and Vice President Biden, go to http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/health_care/.
- Check out the ADA's website at www.eatright.org
- Read up on some of the current issue briefs at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy_1537_ENU_HTML.htm
-
- Subscribe to the ADA's On the Pulse email newsletter – an email giving you up-to-date information on proposed legislation and current issues
- http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options.html - the Center for Science in the Public Interest website gives information on current policy issues
- http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=4&tax_level=2&tax_subject=270&topic_id=1334 – the USDA Legislation and Policy website. This site gives resources for more information ranging from the Library of Congress to an internet law library.
- Speak your mind by using the ADA's Grassroots manager:
 - Go to:
 - <http://www.eatright.org>
 - * Enter in your ADA member number and password
 - * Go to the Advocacy and the Profession page
 - * Select "Grassroots Manager" on the left hand side
 - * If prompted, re-enter your ADA member number and password
 - * Select the "Take Action" tab
 - * Select the letter titled "Health Care Reform 2009"
 - * Select your congressperson and both your Senators
 - * The letter will open up, feel free to add in your own personal statements at the beginning or the end of the letter
 - * Select "send electronically"
 - * Your letter will be sent via e-mail. If it cannot be sent electronically, you can print the letter and fax it to your representatives.
- Check out www.adapac.org – the American Dietetic Association Political Action Committee

The Healthcare Alliance Initiative – Tackling Childhood Obesity



The Healthcare Alliance Initiative is designed to accommodate overweight and obese children and their families. It will provide these children nutrition counseling by RD's and will be covered by their insurance companies. Doctors will refer overweight or obese children to registered dietitians who will be reimbursed for providing nutrition counseling over a minimum of four visits. With nearly 1/3 of American children being overweight or obese, this is a huge step in tackling this epidemic. The initiative is also a great way to integrate the primary care physicians, dietitians and the insurance companies.

This initiative is a collaborative effort between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dietetic Association is actively taking a part in this initiative. ADA President, Martin M. Yadrick says this "is a wonderful opportunity for ADA RD members to positively impact children's health. ADA is proud to be a part of this effort". He continued with, "This marks the first time that these stakeholders – health professionals, insurance providers and companies – have joined together to tackle childhood obesity in a comprehensive way," Yadrick said. "We believe the Alliance Healthcare Initiative can be vital in prevention and treatment. This is exactly the type of collaborative program that ADA has long believed is needed to address and combat the childhood obesity epidemic."

The program provides at least four visits to a primary care physician and four visits with a registered dietitian. Many healthcare organizations are taking part in this initiative, such as BCBS of NC and MS, Aetna and Wellpoint. BCBS of NC actually already covers up to 6 visits to a dietitian for children and adults. Georgia will be participating in this initiative in the Atlanta area and Marion. During the first year of this program, nearly one million children will have access to this benefit option. The long-term goal of the Alliance Healthcare Initiative is that within the first three years, 25 percent of all overweight children (approximately 6.2 million) will have access to the benefit.



The USDA Food and Nutrition website now has a page that covers all of the USDA nutrition assistance programs (WIC, School meals, FDIPIR etc), affected by the 2009 Recovery Act. Visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/recovery/default.htm>

“Nutrient Rich Foods” for the Right Start in Life

Arlene Murrell MS, RD, LD, CLE
Nutrition Affairs Program Manager
Southeast United Dairy Industry Association, Inc.



Many American children are overweight, but just as troubling is the fact that many are also under-nourished. Because kids do not eat enough of the right foods, they aren't getting enough of five key nutrients: calcium, magnesium, potassium, vitamin E, and fiber, according to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

The guidelines identified four “Food Groups to Encourage” from the USDA's *MyPyramid*: fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods, and low-fat and fat-free milk or milk products. Encouraging kids and families to eat adequate quantities of these nutrient-rich foods can help ensure that they are getting balanced nutrition from their diets.

Dairy Foods: Rich in Nutrients, But Lacking in Some Diets

The dairy group, one of the highlighted food groups, is often underestimated as a source of key nutrients. Known as a superior calcium source, dairy foods also deliver potassium and magnesium – three of the five “nutrients of concern for children.”



A number of studies have shown that getting calcium is a key to building peak bone mass and preventing osteoporosis and fractures later in life. The American Academy of Pediatrics calls dairy foods “preferred” sources of calcium compared to supplements and other foods.

Unfortunately, half of children ages 2 through 8 and three quarters of children ages 9 through 19 don't get the recommended daily amount of milk or milk products. The 2003-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found that African-American children have lower intakes of calcium, magnesium, and potassium than children of other races and ethnicities. This is consistent with a recent finding that adolescent African-Americans eat and drink less dairy than non-African-Americans.



All children 2 to 8 years should get at least two cups a day of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products and three cups a day once they turn 9. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends four dairy servings a day for adolescents. The first step to putting these guidelines into practice is to be aware of them – but 60 percent of parents don't know how much calcium their kids are supposed to be getting.

A Doctor's Influence – In and Out of the Office

Physicians can start by promoting healthy eating in the counseling room. Asking patients about their eating habits, educating them about the importance of balanced nutrition, and recommending a healthy diet that includes low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains are positive steps a healthcare provider can take. A doctor can also help by referring a patient to a registered dietitian when appropriate.

Outside the office, physicians can make a difference in community schools. A respected voice can encourage schools to promote nutrient-rich foods lacking in children's diets and discourage the marketing and availability of foods and beverages low in critical vitamins and minerals.

Poor nutrition in American children isn't only a behavior gap; it's a knowledge gap. Because of their expertise and the respect they command in their communities, health professionals have an important role to play in closing that gap and steering families onto a healthier path through education, guidance and active involvement.

References on page 10.



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7. Opinion Research Corporation for GTC Nutrition



There's still time to register for the GDA Annual Meeting



The Georgia Dietetic Association
Leaders in Nutrition and Health

Georgia Dietetic Association Annual Meeting
March 26-28, 2009
at
Callaway Gardens

Register online
<http://www.gda-online.org/annualmtg.php>
or
Contact Kelly Schriver, GDA Executive Director
info@gda-online.org