



Photo: Katherine Turner

Keeping an Aging Nation Healthy

10,000 baby-boomers turn 65 every day

There's no disputing the demographics. Baby boomers are at or rapidly approaching retirement age.

"Ten-thousand baby boomers turn 65 every day," says Basia Belza, a core investigator at the Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) within the University of Washington School of Public Health.

Those numbers are growing even faster for the over-85s, quadrupling from 5.5 million in 2010 to 19 million by 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts.

The field of "healthy aging"—keeping older Americans physically and cognitively healthy for as long as possible—is an important research opportunity for the UW School of Public Health, says Jeffrey Harris, new chair of the School's Department of Health Services and former director of the HPRC, one of 26 Prevention Research Centers in the U.S. funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"A fall for an older adult can be a death sentence," Harris says. "What are we doing to help them cope and live independently for as long as they can?"

The Importance of Staying Fit

The HPRC, home to many of the UW's research efforts on healthy aging, was recently named the coordinating center for a new CDC-funded Healthy Brain Research Network to promote cognitive health among older Americans. The network includes five other universities.

Examples of the network's projects: Hosting a webinar on cognitive aging, helping states develop Alzheimer's work plans, and reviewing research on best

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Dementia— The New Epidemic

Dementia cases could triple by 2050, according to the World Alzheimer Report 2015.

"Dementia is the new epidemic facing the Western world," says Annette Fitzpatrick, research professor of Family Medicine and Epidemiology.

Staying fit and socially active may be the most important things people can do to delay the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, Fitzpatrick says. Right now, we are still searching for effective drugs to treat dementia in older people, she notes.

Fitzpatrick is a co-investigator of the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), which has followed 7,000 adults from ages 45 to 84 since 2000. MESA is funded by the NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

One factor researchers are looking at is cognitive function. They've found differences in cognition by race/ethnicity as well as by age, education, occupational status, household size, and other factors.

"There are many other cultural variables needing further study," Fitzpatrick says, including quality of education and parents' involvement in early childhood development. She hopes this research "will lead to a better understanding of the risk and ways to prevent dementia across cultures."

In another effort, the UW is

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Annette Fitzpatrick

Photo: UW Department of Family Medicine





Photo: Katherine Turner

Seniors exercising in an EnhanceFitness class

ways to measure the benefits of physical activity on cognitive impairment.

One highly successful example of HPRC's work has been EnhanceFitness, a group exercise program for seniors developed by the HPRC and its partners in the 1990s. More than 50,000 people have participated in the program, which is offered at YMCAs and other agencies across the country.

Research has shown the exercise program improves physical, emotional, and social health, while resulting in lower health costs and fewer deaths among Medicare enrollees.

HPRC's current core research project, funded by the CDC, aims to design a system to increase referrals from physical therapists (PTs) to EnhanceFitness classes. "It's a win-win," says Principal Investigator Miruna Petrescu-Prahova, assistant professor of Health Services. "PTs can send patients to a trusted program that helps to address physical therapy goals while the Y gets new people and possibly new members."

Researchers are focusing on PTs because they have many opportunities to connect patients to programs, Petrescu-Prahova says. The HPRC will test a toolkit to improve links between PTs and YMCAs in a randomized controlled trial at 20 YMCAs across 13 states.

Mall Walking—An Easy Way to Exercise

Getting more seniors walking is another goal of SPH researchers. Belza, also a professor in the School of Nursing and an adjunct professor in Health Services, led development of a CDC-funded mall-walking guide this year.

The resource guide touts the benefits of walking: Adults who engage in regular brisk walking are at lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. They also may sleep better, lower their risk for falls, and delay the onset of dementia.

Belza says malls are particularly good places for older

adults because of their climate control, flat surfaces, security guards, water fountains, accessible free parking, and bathrooms, to name some benefits.

The guide was highlighted recently by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murphy in a national *Step It Up!* campaign for more walking and walkable communities.

Managing Depression

More than half of older adults have undiagnosed depression, often classified as minor depression. "It can be just as debilitating as major depression," says Lesley Steinman, a research scientist at HPRC.

She works on a program called PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives), which was developed by HPRC and the local Area Agency on Aging to better recognize and treat depression in older adults. Trained providers visit clients in their homes.

PEARLS has been offered in 50 programs across 18 states and has reached more than 2,000 people. In King County, a tax levy funds efforts to focus on veterans and others.

Florida will soon become the first state to offer PEARLS at a statewide level. Assistant Professor Norma Coe and PhD student Sara Beth Barnett are conducting an economic evaluation of PEARLS to see if it saves money by reducing hospitalization and nursing home placements.

The UW's new CoMotion center currently trains providers on how to use PEARLS. CoMotion seeks to take innovative solutions from UW and give them wider impact.

Dementia—The New Epidemic

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collaborating with Group Health Research Institute to understand better how the brain and body age over time. Adult Changes in Thought is a long-running study of 2,000 older patients, funded by the National Institute of Aging and led by Drs. Eric Larson and Paul Crane.

It's the world's only study able to link outcomes for dementia and other aspects of aging with a wealth of medical, laboratory, and pharmaceutical records. So far, among its many findings, the study has linked regular

exercise to reduced risk of dementia and found that risk for dementia is tied to blood-sugar levels, even for people without diabetes.

Another major effort to understand dementia is led by Walter Kukull, professor of Epidemiology, who directs the National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center, based at SPH. The center collects and makes available to researchers detailed clinical data from about 30 Alzheimer Disease Centers across the United States.

SPH Making an Impact

Teaching Public Health to Diverse High School Students

More than 80 Seattle high school students were immersed in public health topics during a summer course co-taught by Assistant Dean Sara Mackenzie. The School hosted the core curriculum for the UW Upward Bound program—a federally funded project to help aspiring college students from low-income families. “My biggest goal is to get a much broader percentage of our population informed about public health,” Mackenzie said. Subjects included epidemiology, biostatistics, behavioral change, health policy, public health genetics, health literacy, and the social determinants of health.

Delivering Health Across Disciplines

A UW effort to teach and deliver health sciences across disciplines recently wrapped up its second year. About 650 students from the six Health Sciences schools took part in the Interprofessional Education Initiative program. Faculty member Michelle Averill led planning for a session on pediatric dental caries, or tooth decay, a major public health problem. The exercise was part of an effort to get students to consider the fundamental causes of a larger health issue rather than focusing solely on the individual patient.

Tracking School Lunch Times in Seattle

Elementary school students in Seattle don’t get enough time to finish lunch, according to research from Nutritional Sciences students. Eighteen graduate students in Donna Johnson’s Public Health Nutrition class—working with instructor Mary Podrabsky—spent winter quarter documenting lunch time at seven city schools. They found children had only 12 minutes of “seated time” on average; district policy calls for 20 minutes. Their report was



Photo: Katherine Turner

Public Health was the theme of the summer UW Upward Bound program

presented earlier this year to the Seattle Public School Wellness Task Force.

Creating Safer, Healthier Public Spaces

Students in a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) course teamed with the Seattle Department of Transportation and the Department of Planning and Development to conduct an HIA of the Delridge Multimodal Corridor Project in West Seattle. The project aims to transform the area crossed by busy roads into safer and healthier public spaces. The course is taught by Andrew Dannenberg and Edmund Seto of SPH and Fritz Wagner from the Department of Urban Design and Planning. The students came mostly from the School of Public Health, College of Built Environments, and Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.

Preparing Pharmacy Assistants in Malawi

The first 50 students have graduated from an innovative pharmacy assistant training program in Malawi. They will work in rural health centers, dispensing medication and managing inventory. Graduates are expected to make an immediate impact, allowing health workers to devote more time to patient care. The program was a collaboration between the UW Global Medicines Program, the Malawi Ministry of Health, USAID, the Malawi College of Health Sciences, and Seattle-based NGO VillageReach.



Photos, l to r: monkeybusinessimages/iStock/Thinkstock, Natalie Hawwa/USAID

(left) Grad students found that Seattle schoolchildren are getting less than the recommended seated time to eat their lunches
(right) A student attends to patients during training in a rural Malawi pharmacy

Student Awards & Scholarships

SPH student support funds, made possible by generous donations from friends and alumni, recognize academic merit and promise. If you are interested in learning more about supporting our students, please contact Megan Ingram, 206-616-7197 or mkingram@uw.edu.

Undergraduate Student Assistance Fund

The School of Public Health has launched an Undergraduate Student Assistance Fund to aid students from diverse backgrounds. The awards support students who have overcome economic and educational disadvantages or personal adversity in their pursuit of higher education.

Inaugural winners for the 2015–2016 year:

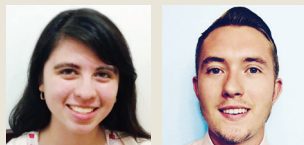
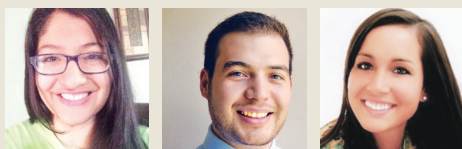
Jocelyn Castillo, Public Health Major

Brian Cedeno-Betancourt, Public Health Major

Daysha Gunther, Public Health Major

Phillip Milligan, Health Informatics and Health Information Management

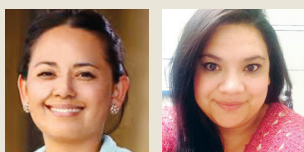
Christine Perez Delgado, Public Health Major



(clockwise from top left): Jocelyn Castillo, Brian Cedeno-Betancourt, Daysha Gunther, Phillip Milligan, Christine Perez Delgado

Graduate School Fellowships For UW Latino/a Scholars

These fellowships provide one-time awards to students with a demonstrated commitment to Latino communities, regardless of documented status.

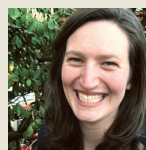


Janeth Sanchez (left), PhD student in Health Services, and **Maria Blancas** (right), MPH student in Health Services (Community

Oriented Public Health Practice Program), were cited for their academic research, work, and/or service benefiting Latino communities.

SPH Endowed Fellowship

The SPH Endowed Fellowship rewards graduate students who demonstrate outstanding academic merit and leadership potential in the field of public health.



Vivian Lyons, a second-year MPH student in Epidemiology (Maternal & Child Health), is a research assistant at the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center.

She studies the unmet needs of students returning to school after traumatic brain injuries. Winning the fellowship “opens up a lot of time for me so I can focus on my independent research and my thesis,” Lyons says. Her thesis looks at whether arrests have an impact on intimate partner violence. Her independent project is about whether current gestational weight-gain guidelines should be revised. Vivian received her BS in Public Health from SPH in 2013.

Rattlinggourd Scholarship

The 2015–2016 Rattlinggourd Scholarship is dedicated to fostering public health advances in Native American and Alaska Native communities by providing support to SPH students.



Curtis Rodgers, a senior majoring in Environmental Health, will use the Rattlinggourd Scholarship to help pay tuition. He spent last summer working as an environmental health

officer for the Indian Health Service in New Mexico, inspecting food and conducting education campaigns about such issues as child passenger safety and tularemia (rabbit fever). “I came to the UW because I wanted to find a way to work with communities that were underserved, and I figured Environmental Health was the best way to do that,” Rodgers says. He plans to work in rural communities in Alaska after graduation.

The Castner Fund: Giving Back To the Environment and SPH

It's not every day that an Environmental Health undergraduate determines his next career step is dental school, but in the case of Dr. Russell Castner, that's precisely what happened. The 1971 graduate in Environmental Health surveyed the landscape of career opportunities and decided dentistry was a better option.

"At that time in the 1970s, the government was really the only option for employment, and there were not many jobs available," Dr. Castner explained. "Dentistry was always in the back of my mind, and I had been accepted into the UW Dental Program, so I decided it was the road to take."

However, through the decades of cavities, crowns, and root canals, Dr. Castner never stopped thinking about his health studies in clean water and clean air. His commitment and support of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences (DEOHS) has continued over the years. In 2007 he made a contribution to establish the Russell L. Castner Endowed Research Fund. Dr. Castner said, "I knew graduate work would've been my next move, so I thought I could support the next generation of grad students. The faculty were so dedicated to the students and worked tirelessly to build the department. I was in one of

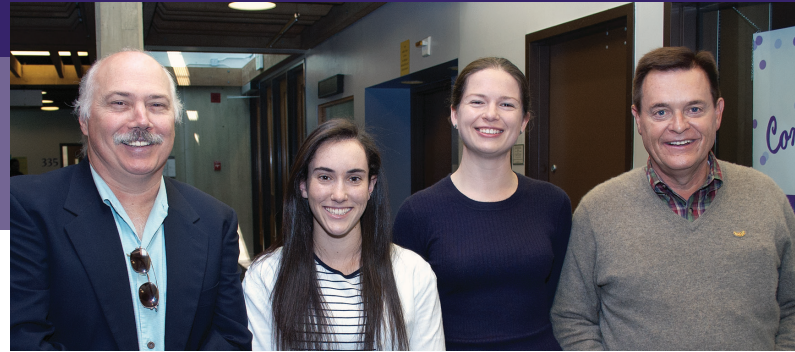


Photo: Sarah Fish

(l to r): DEOHS Chair Michael Yost, Castner Fund recipients Victoria Balta and Jane Pouzou, and Dr. Russell Castner

the first graduating classes of the School of Public Health, and I wanted to see it continue to grow. I had such good experiences working with faculty like Jack Hatlen and Peter Breyse that I knew I wanted to give back to the department."

Support from the Castner endowment has been a huge benefit to its most recent recipients, Victoria Balta and Jane Pouzou. Their awards enabled them to travel to conferences this summer that they would not have been able to afford. "These funds allowed both students to have experiences on a national level and brought their work outside the walls of the Health Sciences building," said Mike Yost, chair of DEOHS.

As Dr. Castner nears retirement, he and his wife Svanee are looking forward to following the success of students who have received their endowment support and to meeting new students every year.

"There are plenty of alumni to support the School of Dentistry and of course I do, too," said Dr. Castner, "but I know my support of students working in SPH around clean air and clean water helps us all."



Photo: Amy Saupe

Heather Fowler aims to create a new model for sustainable dairy farming

Bullitt Foundation Environmental Fellowship Award

The Bullitt Foundation selected **Heather Fowler**, a PhD student in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, for its annual Environmental Fellowship Award, a highly selective, \$100,000 prize given to a single graduate student. She plans to use the award to investigate issues that affect human, animal, and environmental health in dairy practices.

"Emerging environmental health issues are often multi-factorial and really complex, and there is no one easy solution," said Fowler, a veterinarian and a researcher in SPH's Center for One Health Research. The One Health approach brings together stakeholders from human, animal, and environmental health.

The fellowship is awarded to an outstanding graduate student from a community underrepresented in the environmental movement who has demonstrated exceptional capacity for leadership as well as scholarship.

"It's trying to identify young people—pretty much at the start of their careers—that have promise and then giving them a boost to hopefully develop that promise," says Bullitt Foundation President Denis Hayes.



Photo: Courtesy of Jeff Harris

Jeffrey Harris Becomes New Health Services Chair

When Jeff Harris was 3 years old, he announced on a TV show that he was going to be a pediatrician. He made good on his word and eventually earned an MD, plus an MPH and an MBA.

On Aug. 1, Harris became Chair of Health Services, one of five SPH departments. He leads a team of about 60 core faculty while overseeing eight main degree programs, four research centers, and a \$20 million budget. About 400 students are enrolled in the department at any given time. He previously directed the School's Health Promotion Research Center and served as Vice Chair of the Health Services Department.

"We are a very broad department," Harris said. "That means we can tackle just about anything." Among the opportunities: Evaluating the impact of the Affordable Care Act, improving the well-being of the elderly and of Latinos who face health disparities, and promoting health in the workplace.

New Center to Screen Chemicals For Their Impact on Health

Earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency announced \$6 million in seed funding for a Predictive Toxicology Center within the School of Public Health. It will enable researchers to develop more accurate *in vitro* models—organ-mimicking cell cultures—to test chemicals for their potential risk to humans and to help accelerate the evaluation of large numbers of chemicals.

Tens of thousands of chemicals are currently in use, with more introduced every year. However, scientists have determined the toxicity to human health for only a fraction of these because the traditional method of testing is time- and cost-prohibitive. High-capacity *in vitro* systems to screen chemicals are badly needed.

Professors Elaine Faustman and Terrance Kavanagh in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences will co-direct the new center. Researchers from SPH and from the schools of Pharmacy and Medicine will collaborate to develop these *in vitro* models.

Fifth Seattle Symposium In Biostatistics

A premier Biostatistics event will take place November 21–24 in Seattle, featuring faculty from the SPH Department of Biostatistics. The Symposium, held every five years, was developed under the direction of former SPH Dean Gil Omenn and rapidly became a nationwide event. This is the fifth Seattle Symposium in Biostatistics.

Its focus will be the use of biomarkers for diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy. "Biomarkers present a great use in diagnosis and therapy guidance," said Thomas Fleming, professor of Biostatistics and Statistics. "They allow us to match interventions with the people who will most benefit."

The Symposium includes short courses taught by faculty, including current and former Biostatistics Department Chairs Patrick Heagerty, Bruce Weir, and Fleming. Gil Omenn will moderate a panel discussion on regulations and ethics on the final day. Besides the Department of Biostatistics, sponsors are Axio Research, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Cell Therapeutics, Gilead Sciences, Novartis, and Roche/Genentech. Additional information is at <http://symposium.biostat.washington.edu/>.

Alumni Updates

Nicole Ide, MPH 2015, Global Health, received a Graduate School Distinguished Thesis Award for Social Sciences. She is in Nepal on a Fulbright award working with Dhulikhel Hospital.

Jon Nagata, MS 2015, Environmental Health, is with the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Research Participation Program at the Environmental Protection Agency in WA, DC. He is working to improve the security and resilience of drinking water and wastewater infrastructures.

Laura Bautista Rodriguez, BS 2015, Public Health Undergrad Major, is an intern at Sea Mar Community Health Centers in South Park, Seattle.

Leah Todd, BS 2015, Public Health Undergrad Major, is with the CDC Public Health Associate Program in Juneau, AK.

Alyssa Shinto, BA 2014, Public Health Undergrad Major, is the program associate for the Federal Affairs Department at the National Association of Community Health Centers in the WA, DC area.

Jonathan Kocarnik, PhD 2013, Public Health Genetics, a post-doctoral fellow and research associate at Fred Hutch, has a two-year appointment at the UW Institute of Translation Health Sciences. He will study the communication of genetic test results to cancer patients and their families.

Susan Marzolf, MPH 2012, Global Health, served as an OB/Gyn specialist at the main maternity hospital in

Asmara, Eritrea. She supported the development of a training program that Eritrean residents created and taught.

Colin Walker, MHA 2009, Health Services, is director at Virginia Mason Medical Center in University Village in Seattle.

James C Kile, MPH 2004, Health Services, is a veterinary medical officer and public health veterinarian with the CDC in Atlanta. He recently returned from a six-year CDC assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, where he directed the Influenza and Animal-Human Interface Program.

Gregory Holzman, MPH 2002, Health Services, was named the new state medical officer for the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services.

Tom Machala, eMHA 1989, Health Services, is the public health director in Jefferson County, OR.

Michael Phillips, MPH 1985, Epidemiology, SPH Distinguished Alumnus in 2013, was appointed to the Order of Canada.

Ann Marie Kimball, MPH 1981, Epidemiology, is now a senior consulting fellow at Chatham House Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs.

Steven Macdonald, MPH 1981, Health Services; PhD 1994, Epidemiology, clinical associate professor of Epidemiology at SPH, received the Pumphandle Award for outstanding achievement in applied epidemiology from the national Council of State & Territorial Epidemiologists.

We want to hear what our alumni are doing! Please send your news and updates to sphalum@uw.edu.

New Chair Of Epidemiology

Victoria Holt was named new Chair of the Department of Epidemiology. A faculty member since 1991, Holt earned her MPH (1987) and PhD (1990) in Epidemiology from SPH. She had been serving as interim Chair since early 2015. Read the next, spring issue of *SPH Connect* for a more detailed profile.



This Year's Common Book: *The New Jim Crow*

Each year, incoming students of the six UW Health Sciences schools are asked to read a common book, around which workshops, discussions, films, and presentations are planned throughout the academic year. This year's book is *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. Her theme is how many of the gains of the civil rights movement have been undercut by the imprisonment of so many black Americans in the war on drugs. "Our system of mass incarceration functions more like a caste system than a system of crime prevention or control," she has said.



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New Faculty



Ashkan Afshin, *Acting Assistant Professor, Global Health*—Works with the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation on the Global Burden of Disease project, leading the effort to estimate the disease burden attributable to dietary risk factors.



Tania Busch Isaksen, *Lecturer, DEOHS*—Researches public health impacts associated with climate change and the intersection between sustainability and consumerism.



Sarah Cave, *Senior Lecturer, Health Services*—Focuses on health care management and strategic management, drawing on 15 years' experience as a health care leader and executive.



Paul Fishman, *Associate Professor, Health Services*—Develops ways to analyze cost changes over time, especially around health behaviors such as smoking; identifies health care programs that optimally balance effectiveness and efficiency.



Anne-Marie Gloster, *Lecturer, Epidemiology (Nutritional Sciences)*—Brings expertise in food and culinary education, sustainable food systems, and food services management. One focus is whether measures of kitchen literacy can be another indicator of health status.



Jeremy Hess, *Associate Professor, DEOHS*—Focuses on climate change health impacts and adaptations, health care disaster risk management, the epidemiology of extreme heat, and heat early-warning systems.



Scott Ickes, *Assistant Professor, Health Services*—Specializes in developing and evaluating programs to improve maternal and child nutrition in the U.S. and East Africa.



Gita Krishnaswamy, *Senior Lecturer, Health Services*—Focuses on health equity, education and health policy, and health education.



Kurt O'Brien, *Senior Lecturer, Health Services*—Specializes in leadership development and coaching, interpersonal skills development, team development, strategic planning, and conflict resolution.



Patricia Pavlinac, *Acting Assistant Professor, Global Health*—Focuses on identifying interventions to halt morbidity and mortality attributed to enteric and diarrheal diseases, and researches pediatric tuberculosis.



Jeff Sconyers, *Senior Lecturer, Health Services*—Focuses on emergency preparedness and response, and institutional conflicts of interest. He was SVP and General Counsel at Seattle Children's Hospital for 21 years.



David Smith, *Professor, Global Health*—Uses quantitative tools to investigate how infectious diseases persist in populations, the associated burden on human health, and the effects of interventions.