

Going Global: Weill Cornell Students Study Emerging Global Public Health Issues

In between a Weill Cornell student's first and second year, a curious thing happens. Their summers disappear and coursework becomes a year-round experience. But before that happens, many students use their last few fleeting summer months to take an international elective and travel abroad to learn about health-care delivery in other, often less affluent, countries.

"It's the only free summer that the students have," said Dr. Madelon Finkel, director of the Office of Global Health Education and professor of clinical public health at Weill Cornell. "At that point, the students are well-versed in epidemiology and public health, which allows them to focus on social aspects of medicine."

In order to receive credit and financial assistance, students must craft a project proposal and have both a Weill Cornell and host country sponsor it before going abroad. After returning, students must report the outcome of their projects. Each student is required to prepare a poster for presentation at a reception held in early October. In addition to sharing their experience with their classmates, the presentations also serve to whet the appetite for an international experience among the incoming first-year class.

Second-year student Ian Huntington's five-week experience this past summer in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, represents in some sense both what the College's program has achieved and what it seeks to do in the future.

"I kept my proposal pretty open. I wanted to remain flexible and keep looking around for questions that grabbed me," said Huntington. While observing in a general clinic, he realized that diabetes typified something of a social change in Guatemala; as the country undergoes globalization, diseases associated with obesity are on their way to becoming as important as those associated with malnutrition.

Huntington began looking closely at diabetic health-care delivery, from observing patient-doctor interactions in a government-sponsored specialty diabetes clinic to researching records at the regional public health office. Before the end of the year, a first-person account of his experience will be published in *Global Pulse*, the international health journal of the American Medical Student Association.

According to Dr. Finkel, last year 20 percent of first-year students took an international elective, while 30 to 40 percent of fourth-year students elect to spend between 6 to 8 weeks abroad generally focusing on providing medical care to underserved populations and taking on more substantial research projects in a variety of fields. One of the newest opportunities for international student electives is at the Bugando Medical Center in Tanzania, with whom Weill Cornell has shared several years of cooperative exchanges and support. Student interest in sub-Saharan Africa has dramatically increased, with three to four students traveling there each year. Other opportunities include programs in Panama, India and Australia, which gives the student both an urban and outback experience.

"We are trying to expand from a traditional focus on infectious disease to encompass other opportunities in a wide variety of locations, including public health aspects of global health," said Dr. Finkel. "Our program at Weill Cornell seeks to provide an enriching experience in both developing and developed countries."

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Staying Healthy Over the Holidays (Recipes Included)

For many people watching their diet, the holidays can be a very difficult time of the year. To help prepare for the annual siege of fatty foods and sweets, Weill Cornell's Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health hosted Lynn Goldstein, M.S., R.D., C.D.N., the center's nutritionist, and Julie Negrin, M.S., director of culinary arts at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, for a seminar and demonstration of healthy holiday cooking on November 14.

Although fears of gaining 10 to 15 pounds over the holidays may be slightly exaggerated (average weight gain is between one and five pounds), studies show that the holiday season has a disproportionate effect on health compared to the rest of the year. One major reason is that health changes occurring between Halloween and the Super Bowl in early January are often long lasting and not easily reversed.

"Weight gained during the holiday season is not usually lost during the rest of the year," said Goldstein.

A second reason may be a willingness to indulge ourselves, and our families, more during the holidays; according to Goldstein, the typical Thanksgiving dinner has up to 3,450 calories, even though the most recent Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends between 2,000 and 3,000 for most people in an entire day. "The bottom line is that we tend to get out of control during this time of year," she said.

If you're cooking, Goldstein recommends a number of ways to provide healthier meals for your family over the holidays:

- Replace butter with unsaturated oils such as olive or canola.
- Use nonfat or reduced-fat dairy or use dairy substitutes like soy.
- Bake/broil/steam instead of frying.
- Season with herbs, spices and tangy vegetables instead of fat.
- Serve roasted vegetables, fruits and reduced fat cheeses for appetizers.
- Serve grains instead of stuffing.
- Try winter squash for an alternative to potatoes.
- Make a healthy dessert along with the cookies.
- Cut the sugar in recipes.

Setting goals and staying focused can help minimize any holiday weight gain, Goldstein advised. "Overeating starts during Halloween and ends with Super Bowl, but minimizing stress and staying on track can help make the new year a healthier one," she said.

Julie Negrin, M.S., the culinary arts director at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, also provided a healthy holiday cooking demonstration and the following recipes:

Roasted Garlic Butternut Squash Soup

- 1 head of garlic

- 1 jeweled yam
- 2 butternut squash (about 4 pounds total), halved lengthwise, seeded
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 yellow onions, thinly sliced
- 4 cups vegetable stock or butternut squash soup by Imagine
- 3 cups water
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 8 oz. whole milk plain yogurt
- 1 bunch chives, diced

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut top 1/4 inch off heads of garlic to expose cloves and generously pierce yam. Place squash, cut side down, on foiled baking sheet alongside garlic and yam. Bake until garlic, yam and squash are very soft, about 1 hour.

While vegetables are roasting, heat butter in dutch oven or stockpot and add onions. Caramelize onions over low heat for at least 30 minutes. When vegetables are done roasting, scoop the flesh out of each and add to onions. Add broth, water and spices and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for at least 20 minutes (or up to 2 hours).

Just prior to puréeing soup, add yogurt. Purée in either a blender or food processor, or use an immersion blender. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cool slightly. Cover and refrigerate.) Ladle into bowls. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

Serves 8

Preparation time: 1 ½ hours

Recipe by Julie Negrin

Marbleized Root Vegetable Puree

Root vegetables became a mainstay of the New England diet. The crops grew well during the summer and could be stored in barrels of sand or in root cellars to keep through the long winter. This spectacular casserole has potatoes, parsnips, turnips and carrots, and is sweetened with just a hint of pear. The pureed vegetables are swirled together in the baking dish to create a pretty marbled effect.

- 2 pounds russet potatoes (about 3 large), peeled, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 8 ounces turnips (about 2 medium), peeled, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 8 ounces parsnips, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium pear (about 6 ounces), peeled, cored, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup whipping cream, soy milk or non-dairy creamer

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter or nonhydrogenated margarine (such as Earth Balance)
- 1 1/2 pounds carrots (about 6 large), peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Additional ground nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter 2-quart baking dish. Cook potatoes, turnips, parsnips and pear in large pot of boiling salted water until very tender, about 20 minutes. Drain. Return to pot. Stir over low heat until excess moisture evaporates, about 1 minute. Add cream and 5 tablespoons butter and mash until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, cook carrots in another large pot of boiling salted water until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain. Transfer to processor. Add 2 tablespoons butter and 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg and puree until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Alternate potato and carrot purees by 1/2 cupfuls in baking dish. Draw knife through purees to marbleize. Melt 1 tablespoon butter. Drizzle over purees. Sprinkle with additional nutmeg. Cover with foil. (Can be made 1 day ahead; chill.) Bake covered puree until heated through, about 35 minutes (or 45 minutes if chilled).

Serves 10

Source: Bon Appétit, November 1996

Quinoa Stuffing with Sautéed Zucchini

A healthier Thanksgiving dish your guests will gobble up. Quinoa, an ancient grain eaten by the Incas, is high in protein, calcium and iron.

Stuffing

- 2 cups quinoa
- 4 cups water
- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 small zucchini, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ½ cup pine nuts, toasted
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon of orange zest

Dressing

- 4 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 4 tablespoons mirin
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons garlic, finely minced
- Juice of 1 lemon

Start with caramelizing onions by heating olive oil in large skillet and adding onions. Cook on low heat for at least 30 minutes. Stir every few minutes. Add sliced zucchini and cook for 10 more minutes or until tender.

Rinse quinoa in fine-meshed strainer. Bring water and quinoa to a boil in a large saucepan. Turn down heat, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until there is no water in the bottom of the pan. Do not stir. Simply slide a knife down the side of the pan and push quinoa aside to see if there is any water on bottom of pan.

Whisk dressing ingredients together. Toss quinoa with dressing serving bowl. Add onions, zucchini, squash, nuts, parsley and zest. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Serves 6

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Recipe by Julie Negrin

For more seminar information and recipes, visit the Monahan Center Web site at www.monahancenter.org/nutrition.

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Awards & Honors

Dr. Owen Davis, associate professor of reproductive medicine and obstetrics and gynecology, has been named director of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. The society was founded in 1944 and has grown to include members throughout the United States and in more than 100 countries. It is the publisher of the peer-reviewed journal *Fertility and Sterility*. Dr. Davis also serves as associate director of the in vitro fertilization program at the Center for Reproductive Medicine and Infertility Center at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell. His current clinical and academic focus is assisted reproductive technology.

Dr. John Moore, professor of microbiology and immunology, has been named the 10th most cited researcher in biology over the past 10 years, according to a survey by Web site incites.com. The commentary and analysis on the Web site is designed to complement the publication, citation and citations-per-paper rankings, and other data, featured in "Essential Science Indicators," from Thomson Scientific. To see the full list, visit in-cites.com/top/2006/third06-mic.html.

Dr. Kutluk Oktay, associate professor of reproductive medicine and obstetrics and gynecology, is the recipient of the Champions of Hope award from Fertile Hope, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to providing reproductive information, support and hope to cancer patients whose medical treatments present the risk of infertility. The award, presented on Nov. 17 in New York City, honors Dr. Oktay's numerous and tireless efforts in infertility research and clinical care. In a letter to Dr. Oktay, Fertile Hope's founder and executive director Lindsay Nohr Beck wrote: "Through your tireless work around the globe—giving presentations, publishing your research, and speaking to the media—you are a true ambassador of awareness and education.... Thanks to you, cancer survivors are fulfilling their parenthood dreams!"

Dr. Stefano Rivella, assistant professor of genetic medicine in pediatrics, has been awarded a 2-year grant of \$200,000 CHF (roughly \$160,000 US) from the Roche Foundation for Anemia Research in Switzerland, for the study of genes responsible for the pleiotropic effects observed in β -thalassemia. Dr. Rivella will serve as lead investigator of the study. Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder with no known cure. Current treatments include regular blood transfusions, iron chelation therapy, and bone marrow transplants.

Dr. Shirling Tsai, a research fellow in the Department of Surgery, is the recipient of the Society of University Surgeons' Ethicon-SUS Surgical Research Fellowship Award for 2006–2007. The \$30,000 scholarship will support Dr. Tsai's study of the effect of TGF-beta on the development of abdominal aortic aneurysms. "She is an extraordinarily bright individual who is extremely talented," said Dr. K. Craig Kent, professor of surgery and chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell, adding, "There is little doubt in my mind that she will evolve into a highly successful surgeon scientist." Dr. Tsai will be presenting a progress report on her research to the SUS Executive Council at the February 2008 Academic Surgical Congress Meeting.

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