

# Cardiovascular Wellness Program Newsletter

Issue 19  
June 2023

### Comments from Linda

Summer “break” is upon us and if you’ve been paying attention, you might have noticed that our schedule is pretty much unchanged. We have something going every week through the rest of June, with occasional one-day holiday breaks (Juneteenth on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> of July). I do plan another one-week break toward the end of July/first of August, so our staff has somewhat of a break before the fall semester gets underway.

Many projects are ongoing (described later) and of course others will come along when classes start again. You might have noticed many new faces in our space—UC Davis is doing an awesome job of sending their cardiac rehab graduates over. Our program is all about modeling healthy behaviors and we enjoy helping those who got started in the hospital world post-event find a pattern to keep going. Other clients continue to find us through the Renaissance Society.

**Parking note:** We have the same arrangement for parking; if you want to have a car in the lot while attending, you should get a “CWP permit”, which has a \$40 annual fee and will go from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Please talk to me about this if you are new to the process.

I will just add I am aware many people have summer travel plans. If you are a regular but will be away, please just let us know; it’s a little unsettling wondering why/when someone disappears.

Hope to see you soon. *Linda*



**Included in this issue:**  
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*When Dr Lopez visited us in May, he shared information about this exciting new grant. This article contains excerpts from an AHA press release.*



PreventionForward

Javier López, MD  
Medical Director, UC Davis  
Cardiac Rehabilitation Program

## Research Project on CVD health impacts of chronic stress

DALLAS, May 4, 2023 — Teams of research scientists from three universities will lead an innovative \$15 million project to study the biological mechanisms of chronic stress that can increase cardiovascular disease risk. The [Strategically Focused Research Network \(SFRN\) on Biologic Pathways of Chronic Psychosocial Stressors on Cardiovascular Health](#) of the American Heart Association will focus on learning more about how the body responds to chronic stress, as well as how certain interventions may help reduce health risks. The grants is going to research teams from Ohio State University, the University of California Davis and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Chronic [stress](#) is recognized as an independent risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease, and it is known to negatively impact the overall health of people living with heart disease. According to Michelle A. Albert, M.D., M.P.H., FAHA, 2022-23 president of the American Heart Association. ““While we continue to learn more about the societal triggers that lead to chronic stress, we need to also have a better understanding of the specific cellular and molecular signaling pathways activated in response to chronic psychosocial stressors. And we need to identify specific stress interventions at population levels and determine how those interventions relate to underlying molecular mechanisms. The multidisciplinary teams working on this new initiative bring extensive experience and expertise, along with the commitment and passion needed to make a real impact.” Albert is the Walter A Haas-Lucie Stern Endowed Chair and professor of medicine, director of the CeNter for the StUdy of AdveRsiTy and CardiovascUlaR Disease (NURTURE Center) and associate dean of admissions at the University of California, San Francisco.

The funding will include a collaborative research project across all three groups, as well as the following four-year grant projects, which began on April 1, 2023:

- **Physical activity Reduces Effects of psychosocial stress And improves Cardiovascular Health (PREACH)** – Led by Kristin Stanford, Ph.D., an associate professor in physiology and cell biology at The Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus, teams of scientists from OSU and Meharry Medical College, an Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Nashville, Tenn., will collaborate to conduct three different projects to determine if exercise can protect against stress-induced heart disease. They’ll specifically be studying the correlation between exercise and changes in the gut bacteria, which is known to influence the development of heart disease. Two of the studies will be basic science research using mouse models – one examining hearts and gut bacteria to see if exercise can reverse the effects of stress on heart health and the other exploring how stress or exercise in a mouse mother can affect her offspring. The third study will focus on using a 24-week diet, education and exercise program called Black Impact for Black men with less-than-ideal heart health. The researchers will seek to determine if the Black Impact intervention improves heart health, how it affects stress and if it changes the gut bacteria in study participants.
- **Psychosocial stRessors and Exposomics on CV health In underServed multiEthnic populations in Northern CA (PRECISE)** – Led by Nipavan Chiamvimonvat, M.D., a professor, associate chief for research in the division of cardiovascular medicine and the co-director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute (CVRI) at the University of California Davis (UC Davis), teams of scientists from UC Davis, UC Davis CVRI and California State University, Sacramento, will study how stress from everyday life can impact heart health. The team will recruit a racially and ethnically diverse group of participants with different backgrounds, various psychosocial stress levels and socioeconomic status from underserved populations in California to investigate how societal, environmental and biological factors may cause stress that can impact heart health. They will also conduct basic science research using animal models to study the mechanism through which a constellation of environmental and social stressors (noise, overcrowding and sleep disruption) impact cardiovascular function. An advanced computational biology

approach will also be used to generate a functional connectome across basic science and clinical projects that will uncover key patterns in signaling pathways between stress and heart health. To support the next generation of cardiovascular researchers, diverse trainee and early career clinicians/researchers will be engaged and trained within and across projects in an interdisciplinary, collaborative, translational science environment.

- **Chronic psychosocial stress and CV dysfunction in cancer survivorship** – Led by Greg Hundley, M.D., chair of the division of cardiology at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and director of the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center in Richmond, teams of scientists from VCU, Wake Forest University and Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C., will look into how long-term, chronic stress causes heart problems and how adding acute stress – stress that occurs more suddenly, like getting a cancer diagnosis – may more suddenly impact heart health. As part of their research, they'll study what is happening in the heart cells when those are damaged by stress and how this causes heart failure. Additionally, they'll explore how different diet and exercise plans may impact stress and heart health and whether it may be beneficial to make changes to diet or exercise habits when experiencing stress to have healthy heart function. The researchers will collect information through pre-clinical science models in laboratories and clinical science involving human subjects.

With the launch of this new network, the American Heart Association has now invested more than \$263 million to establish a total of 15 [Strategically Focused Research Networks](#), studying prevention; hypertension; disparities in cardiovascular disease and stroke; women's health; heart failure; obesity; children; vascular disease; atrial fibrillation; arrhythmias/sudden cardiac death; cardiometabolic health/type 2 diabetes, health technology, cardio-oncology and diversity in clinical trials. Each network centers around the scientific knowledge and knowledge gaps, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the key research topic. Four to six research centers make up each network, bringing together investigators with expertise in basic, clinical and population/behavioral health science to find new ways to diagnose, treat and prevent heart disease and stroke.

The American Heart Association has funded more than \$5 billion in [cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and brain health research](#) since 1949, making it the single largest non-government supporter of heart and brain health research in the U.S. New knowledge resulting from this funding benefits millions of lives in every corner of the U.S. and around the world.

This is a link to a press release from UC Davis describing their component:

<https://health.ucdavis.edu/news/headlines/how-does-stress-from-everyday-life-impact-heart-health/2023/05>



## CWP Projects

List compiled by Linda Paumer

Of course there are things going on this summer, and very likely you might be asked a few things if you are around. Thanks so much for helping students and the program out by joining when you can. A recap of some of our projects:

**6-minute walk.** Asking you do this will never change. This is an important assessment that helps you keep tabs on your status and helps us validate our effectiveness as a program. If someone asks you to do this, please take 6 minutes out of your routine and try it. If you've never done it, please do so. If it's been more than 6 months since you've done it, please reassess!

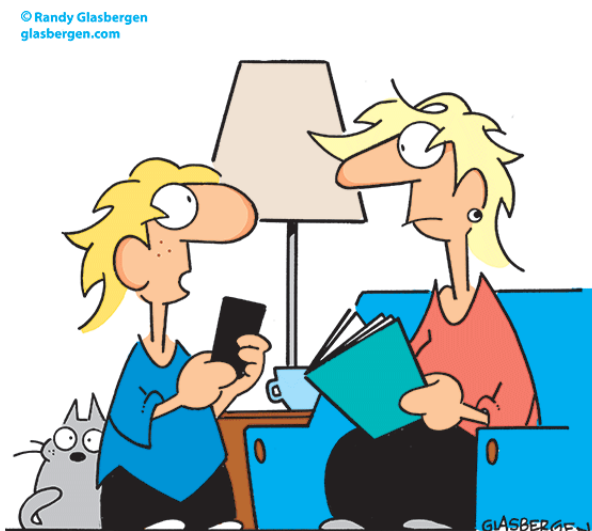
**Sleep Tracking.** If you have an Apple watch or similar device that can be used to track sleep, please consider participating in this project. It will happen in July and ask that you share results from your sleep tracking for two weeks. Details will be out soon.

**Health Status Awareness.** Our curiosity was peaked when Dr. Lopez shared a website where you can get a score for the health status of your neighborhood. Thinking of interactions our summer high school students can organize, we are working on a project asking how you feel about your own health status compared to what the neighborhood score shows. Details out on that soon too.

**Projects with Kim Roberts.** Things are always brewing here and we will be spending the summer coming up with a fun project to do in the fall. Many of you completed a survey for her on sleep habits and you will see results from that very soon. Many of you also participated in a project on technology use (data collected in 2021) and you will see the poster that was compiled with those results gracing our walls very soon. Your participation in these projects is greatly appreciated and the efforts that Kim takes to help us and her fleet of students are also valued greatly.

**More Cooking.** Our kitchen activities aren't really projects, but our goal of trying something new regularly is ongoing and luckily Debbie Lucas, our dietitian, and the summer students are ready to help out here. Please feel free to offer suggestions for things you'd like to try, keeping in mind our whole-food, plant-based goals.

**Fall Prevention Training.** I am keeping the PT-initiated balance activities class going Mondays at 1:15 pm and I am expecting a new collaboration with PT with more personal interactions when the fall semester starts in September.



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"Of course I know how to communicate without a phone. I have an app for that!"

# Summer Fun

By Debbie Lucus, MS, RD, CDCES

After a crazy winter, it looks like summer might finally be upon us. What does summer mean to you? BBQs? Picnics? Camping? Hiking? Traveling? The fair? Air conditioning? How about tasty summer food and beverages? I thought I would discuss tasty, yet healthful beverages for your summertime fun.



## Healthy beverages:

Water, of course, is always the best choice! The standard recommendation remains about 8, 8 ounce glasses of water a day. This apparently was not based on good science, but recent studies have not proven much different. Remember your fruits and veggies that you eat also contribute water, so Dr. Greger ([nutritionfacts.org](http://nutritionfacts.org)) recommends 5, 12 oz glasses a day. Tea and coffee also count towards your liquid goals. Bored with water? Try infused water by adding slices of cucumber, ginger, strawberries or berries. You can also add a few squeezes of lemon or lime, or try mint leaves or a cinnamon stick. A lot of people are using the SodaStream to add bubbles to their water, or just purchase club soda and add the tasty fruits, veggies, spices listed above.

Tea is a great beverage choice and is associated with many health benefits including lowering risk of breast cancer. Try them all: black, white, green, hibiscus (associated with lowering blood pressure), chai, oolong, matcha (ground up tea leaves). Be careful with your additions. For instance, I love my Chai Tea Latte with soy milk made at Starbucks, but the original chai tea which has healthy spices now is diluted with lots of sugar and is better made at home with just my chai tea bag and add my soy milk. For summertime fun (or year-round in my opinion), there is nothing better than tall glass of iced tea – hold the sugar, please.





Coffee counts, too. With or without caffeine. Coffee may be associated with lower risk of death but doesn't have as many healthful benefits as tea. Again, be careful with what you do to your coffee – those Starbucks and Dutch Bros. drinks turn a potentially harmless beverage into a calorie nightmare with the addition of cream, milk and sugar. One 20 ounce café mocha at Dutch Bros has 334 calories. And don't get me started on their frozen mochas!

These aren't exactly fun summer drinks, right? What about lemonade? Contrary to popular belief, lemonade is loaded with sugar. I had a conversation recently with an acquaintance who was ordering lemonade because she had diabetes and thought it was better than soda. She was unaware that it has as much sugar as a soda! Remember that soda has no nutritional qualities – it is just empty calories. A 32 ounce lemonade has 64 grams of sugar and 280 calories. You could make your own with artificial sugar, or just have water with a small splash of lemonade, or better yet, a juice from a lemon. Fruit juices are about the same calories and sugar-wise. There is a reason why it is the perfect treatment for a low blood sugar! If juice is your beverage of choice, dilute it significantly with water or club soda.

What about smoothies? It is better to eat your food than drink it, but smoothies can have a place in our food plan. Use water or plant milk as a base, add fruits and/or veggies, including your greens and you've got a tasty treat. I like to use very little liquid and have it be thick enough to eat with a spoon – this slows me down and allows the blood sugars to rise more slowly.

In a recent blog by Dr. Weil, he encourages green tea to help fight oxidation and inflammation, and discourages those fun summer cocktails (think Pina colada or margarita). They contain excess calories, sugar and in some cases fat.

Try these fun summer drinks from *PlantYou* by Carleigh Bodrug

	<p><b>Watermelon Slushy</b></p> <p>Blend 2 cups watermelon with juice of ½ lime plus ¼ cup ice cold water.</p>
	<p><b>Ice Capp</b></p> <p>Blend 1 frozen banana with 2 cups ice + 1 cup cold coffee + ¾ cup unsweetened almond milk</p>
	<p><b>Snickers Smoothie</b></p> <p>Blend 1 cup unsweetened almond milk with 1 frozen banana + 1.5 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder + 1.5 Tablespoons peanut butter + 1 Tablespoons ground flaxseeds.</p>
	<p><b>Mean Green Smoothie</b></p> <p>Blend 1.5 cups spinach with 1 frozen banana + 1 cup unsweetened almond milk + 1 Tablespoons hemp hearts</p>

Here's a link to another fun summer smoothie idea: <https://www.masteringdiabetes.org/grilled-pineapple-mango-smoothie/>

For those of you on a fluid restriction, don't forget that anything that melts at room temperature counts as fluid. That means in addition to these fun drinks, if you have ice or pudding or soup or popsicles, they count toward your fluid intake also.

Bottom line on beverages: Water is best, tea is second but if you choose other beverages, make it count, with ingredients that will help to promote your health goals.

Happy summer!!!

# Vegan German Potato Salad

Recipe  
Corner

Though the liquid smoke gives this potato salad a somewhat bacony flavor, crumbled tempeh bacon, if you happen to have it, is a great addition.

Servings: 5

Author: Susan Voisin

## Ingredients

- 2 pounds Yukon gold potatoes
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon creole or other whole grain mustard
- salt to taste
- generous grating of black pepper
- 1/16 teaspoon liquid smoket
- ⅓ cup sliced green onions or chopped red onions

## Directions

1. Wash the potatoes well and if they are large, cut them into halves or quarters; try to keep your pieces about the same size so they cook at the same speed. Bring a pot of water to boil, add the potatoes, and cook until they are tender when pierced with a fork. The time will depend on the size of the potatoes (my large, cut in half potatoes took about 25 minutes).
2. Drain the water from the potatoes in a colander and rinse them with cold water to cool them down enough to handle. If you want, you can peel them (I didn't). Chop them into bite-sized cubes and place in a large bowl.
3. Whisk together the vinegar, broth, mustard, and seasonings in a small bowl. Pour over the potatoes and mix well. Stir in the onions. Check flavor and add more vinegar, salt, pepper, or liquid smoke to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

## Nutrition

Serving: 1serving | Calories: 114kcal | Carbohydrates: 32.5g | Protein: 4g | Sodium: 160.4mg | Fiber: 4.3g | Sugar: 1.6g

<https://blog.fatfreevegan.com/2014/06/vegan-german-potato-salad.html>



# Foundations for Mindfulness

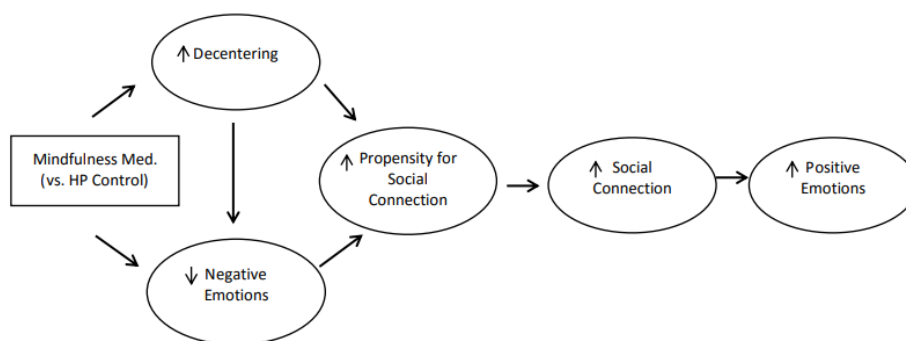
By Linda M, Larsen, RN-BC, RYT

Cari Shulkin has a presentation on Pillar #4 – Social Connections. Mindfulness and social connection have more in common than you may realize. More and more research in the fields of neurobiology and psychology is demonstrating how we are more connected and interdependent than we ever realized. Research findings suggest that increased mindfulness predicts greater social connection: being able to step outside of one's immediate inner experience often leads to gains in social connection and can lead to more positive emotions.



Paying attention in the present moment to all facets of our experience might lead us to feel less lonely and more connected - especially during tense conversations. Feeling more connected and less lonely may, in turn, free our internal resources to be more present.

**Figure 1 Theoretical model of mindfulness, decentering, emotions, and social connection**



Present with you: does cultivated mindfulness lead to greater social connection through gains in decentering and reductions in negative emotions? Kathryn C. Adair <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/concern/dissertations/qv33rx84k>

"It takes a village to raise a child". Whether the expression originated in Africa or Native American, it speaks to the power of community and a team environment to make the trip of life more loving, safe and healthy. I often suggest as we are practicing to give ourselves permission to view mindfulness practice as research or an experiment. The next time you are in a conversation try to truly pay full attention to the other person. Listen and observe the *whole person* not just their words – including body language, attitude, appearance. As you listen, notice your own emotions and physical sensations. Observe if this allows you to feel more connected and further understand their point of view and needs. Observe if this allows you to remain calmer and more positive.

“A wise swimmer does not cross a difficult channel without a boat close behind, with those aboard watching for signs of danger or weariness and providing words of encouragement along the way. Nor does a prudent climber scale a mountain alone, without companions to hold the rope and help along the way.” From *Listening Hearts* by Suzanne G. Farnham et al.

## For more in depth:

<https://www.mindandlife.org/media/how-mindfulness-helps-us-to-build-meaningful-social-connections/>

Although from 2020 – lots of timeless research and appropriate information -

<https://giving.virginia.edu/impact/sense-of-social-connection>



# Exercise Reminders *from Linda Paumer*



We are aware that core strength is important for many reasons, reducing injury risk, and holding us together well. But you can't pin everything on your core. Back pain, knee pain, shin splints, IT band syndrome, plantar fasciitis, and all sorts of other aches and pains however often stem from your hips. It's the muscles around your hips that support your core and pelvis, creating a strong foundation for your limbs to move from. When these muscles (primarily the psoas, iliacus and the gluteus maximus) are not in good shape, you don't have the strong foundation you need, meaning other parts of the body have to pick up the slack. When these other muscles do too much compensating, overuse or repetitive stress injuries can soon kick in. So you should consider hip fitness just as important as core fitness.





If you have tight hips, you have less mobility, which can make even the simplest movements – like walking – painful. Tight hips can also lead to a tilted pelvis, which affects your posture, plus your head and neck alignment. Poor posture is linked to stress and depression, while neck alignment issues can lead to headaches.

Prolonged sitting contributes greatly to this issue. Your hips are contracted whenever you're sitting, and your hip flexors (the large powerful muscles at the front of the hip) are in a shortened position. In as little as 30 minutes, this tightening of the muscles can start being problematic. You experience a loss of elasticity in the muscles, and as you age, this can become more pronounced and the muscles become less pliable. With this in mind, the sun salutations, pelvic stretches and hip opening postures in yoga are encouraged as well as lunges and squats for strengthening.

Things that indicate hip mobility is an issue for you:

- Sitting for any more than four hours a day
- Lower back or knee pain
- Any pinching or pain in your hips
- A feeling of being restricted when you move
- Struggling to touch your toes.

Some exercise to include in your routine to help with hip fitness:

Flexibility					
Strength			