

The Full Plate

The Newsletter for Pace University's
Coordinated MS in Nutrition and Dietetics Program



A Note From the Chair

Greetings Students, Alumni, Preceptors and Colleagues-

As we enter the new year, I am thrilled to share the latest updates from our bustling Nutrition and Dietetics Department. Our students and faculty have shown unwavering commitment to interactive and experiential learning and meaningful community engagement. We are excited to showcase their impressive accomplishments. In this newsletter, I am delighted to highlight the inspiring events and transformative learning experiences that everyone has been a part of. Thank you to all for your dedicated contributions and continued support as we continue to make a meaningful impact in our field.

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Welcome Cohort 7!



Cohort 7 in action at Zwilling Cooking Studio



Pace Mobile Market

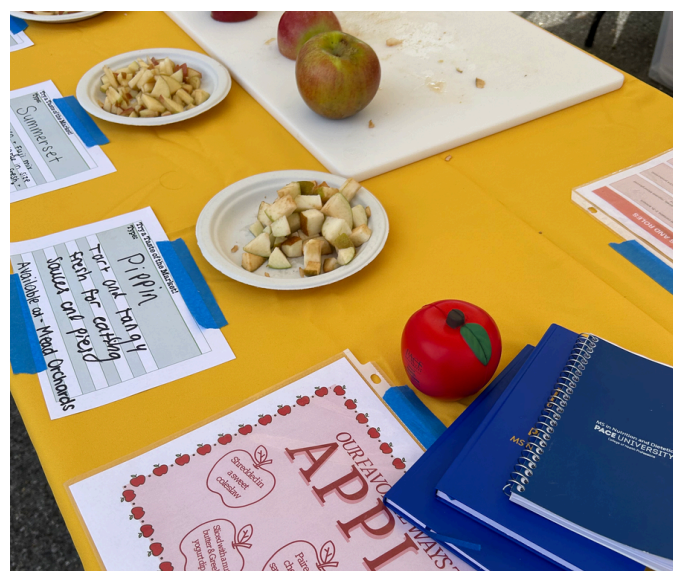


Student Happenings

Pleasantville Farmers Market Apple Tasting Event with ND Students

By Zoe Noyes, Cohort 6

This semester I had the amazing privilege to be involved in a collaboration between Pace University: Nutrition and Dietetics Program and the Pleasantville Farmer's Market. Since we are in the fall season, the vendors of the market were kind enough to donate a variety of apples for people to taste at a stand run by the Pace Nutrition Department. Throughout the event, the graduate students and alumni of the nutrition program met members of the community and discussed the nutritional benefits of apples, while allowing adults and children to choose their favorite sample. Visitors to the stand were also taught about the different textures, flavor profiles, and culinary uses of apples, including making sauce, pie, and snacks. My favorite part of the farmer's market was the interactions with children. We used some apple trivia questions to get school-aged children interested and engaged in the information that we were there to share. As a group, we were able to introduce nutrition in a fun and interactive way, while making a positive impression on the community. As they say, an apple a day keeps the doctor away, or in this case, improves the nutritional literacy of Pleasantville.



Student Happenings

Volunteering with Westchester Rockland Dietetic Association

By David Ehrenberg, Cohort 6

Volunteering with the WRDA has been a rewarding experience. This opportunity allows me to contribute meaningfully to the dietetics community while expanding my professional skills and making meaningful connections. I've had the opportunity to promote and attend various events, helping to amplify WRDA's mission to educate and engage both dietetic professionals and the broader public. I've enjoyed collaborating with a dedicated team and seeing the firsthand impact that WRDA has in promoting nutritional awareness and supporting ongoing learning in the field. It has been a fun, hands-on way to build my skills and feel more involved in the field I'm passionate about.

If anyone's interested in getting involved with the WRDA, there are a couple of great ways to do it! You can become a member, which gives you access to resources, networking events, and learning opportunities. If you're looking to volunteer or become a student liaison, the WRDA often welcomes extra hands for events. You can contact them directly through their website for membership information and event details, or email Shari at shari@keatsnutrition.com.



WRDA Kick off Dinner



Student Happenings

Cooking Up Wellness: Holiday Recipes

By Carly Martone, Cohort 7

This past semester, I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Human Resources Cooking Demonstration Event for wellness initiatives. Together with Professor Opfer and my fellow Cohort 7 classmates, we taught staff how to prepare delicious holiday recipes. The featured recipes included chai-poached pears, a roasted butternut squash, pomegranate, and burrata salad, and grilled carrots with mascarpone and pistachios.

During the event, my classmates and I worked collaboratively to prep, cook, and present these dishes, showcasing a variety of culinary techniques. We emphasized tips for balancing flavors, incorporating seasonal ingredients, and making holiday cooking more approachable and stress-free. It was a rewarding experience to share our knowledge while creating a lively and interactive environment for participants.

Staff members enjoyed a fun and engaging atmosphere, perfect for learning festive recipes to share during the holiday season. They were highly involved, asking questions, sharing their own cooking experiences, and tasting each dish as we went along. Beyond cooking, the event provided a space for connection and creativity, fostering a sense of community through food.

This cooking demonstration highlighted the joy of bringing people together around a shared love of food while promoting healthy, flavorful choices for the holidays. It was truly fulfilling to see how our efforts inspired others to explore new culinary ideas that can be shared with loved ones. I would like to extend my thanks to Professor Opfer for making this event possible and for creating these wonderful recipes.



Notes From the Field

Professor Mary Opfer Awarded the Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence

Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence recognizes faculty in the College of Health Professions for achievement in teaching and the scholarship of teaching.

Professor Opfer expressed gratitude for the recognition, stating, "I was honored to be the recipient of the Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence. Collaborating with my colleagues has brought new ideas to my classes. The students inspire me to create engaging lessons I often learn from them."



Professor Opfer's award was commemorated by Cohort 6 student Kasia Lopez-Gos, who expressed: "Mary Opfer is a one-of-a-kind professor who goes above and beyond to enrich her students' classroom experience. She doesn't just teach; she dedicates herself wholeheartedly to ensuring her students succeed. Her teaching methods are both comprehensive and engaging, blending academic material with real-life anecdotes to make concepts more relatable and easier to apply."

Professor Opfer fosters a welcoming and supportive environment, always ready to address questions and clarify uncertainties. Her approach stimulates meaningful class discussions and encourages open dialogue. Interacting with her feels like a breath of fresh air- free from conflict, worry, or pressure. She ensures her students feel heard, valued, and supported.

Beyond the classroom, she is a tremendous resource, connecting her students with professionals in the dietetic and culinary fields, pointing them in the right direction, sharing valuable resources, and always being willing to lend a helping hand. Professor Opfer exemplifies what it means to be a "difference maker: "someone who positively impacts the lives of others and their community through thoughtful actions and words."

Congratulations on your well-deserved award! We are so proud of you and wish you continued success. Thank you for all your dedication and hard work!"

Notes From the Field

Professors Mary Opfer and Jessica Tosto Attend Teaching Kitchen Collaborative International Symposium

The Teaching Kitchen Collaborative International Symposium took place in Salt Lake City, Utah and gathered over 250 health professionals from 40 states and 6 countries who are committed to enhancing integrative nutrition education and lifestyle modification in teaching kitchen settings. This event was hosted by the University of Utah for two days and featured renowned speakers, valuable networking opportunities, and impactful engagement with local communities and industry partners.

During the symposium, members participated in presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshop sessions on a variety of valuable topics. These topics included harnessing community partnerships, exploring the role of teaching kitchens in the larger Food is Medicine initiative, integrating mindfulness, movement, and other lifestyle practices, promoting environmental sustainability, utilizing technology for virtual or hybrid programs, identifying effective funding models, fostering cultural humility in the kitchen, evaluating program outcomes; and beyond!

Reflecting on the symposium, Professor Tosto stated, “I was truly inspired by the wealth of knowledge and experience shared by experts from around the world. The symposium provided invaluable networking opportunities and actionable insights that will help us further increase the impact of our teaching kitchen here at Pace. We can’t wait to put these ideas into action!”

Expanding on the impact of the event, Professor Opfer shared, “Attending the TKC conference was an opportunity to hear what other institutions and healthcare facilities are doing in their teaching kitchens. There are so many talented and creative people in the TKC. I always come home inspired by what I learn and try to implement some of those new ideas.”



Notes From the Field

Research Highlights: Professor Deanna Ellison's Award-Winning Research in Patient Care Collaboration

Professor Deanna Ellison published “Interdisciplinary Collaboration Between Clinical Dietitians and Wound Care Nurse Specialists Prevents Hospital Acquired Pressure Injuries” in the JAND supplemental issue for October. Presented at FNCE, the abstract was awarded an “Outstanding Abstract” recognition.



Abstract

Learning Outcome

Identify 2 strategies to establish evidence-based interventions in the prevention of hospital acquired pressure injuries by utilizing the expertise of Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Wound Care Nurse Specialists (WCNS).

Introduction

Registered Dietitians (RDs) assess hospitalized patients for risk of Malnutrition. Malnutrition is associated with prolonged hospital stays, increased healthcare costs and developing hospital-acquired pressure injuries (HAPIs). RDs, Wound Care Nurse Specialists (WCNS) and Registered Nurses (RNs) share a common goal to prevent HAPIs. WCNS and RNs assess risk with the Braden scale, which includes a nutrition subscale. RDs use a different process. Sometimes WCNS, RNs and RDs nutritional risks are incongruent. This project sought to improve Braden nutrition subscale accuracy through collaboration, to reduce HAPI through the early implementation of a pressure injury prevention bundle (PIPB).

Methods

Interprofessional collaboration and tailored strategies to improve nutrition risk congruence.

Intervention

RDs assessed malnutrition risk with the Malnutrition Screening Tool (MST) and compared the Braden nutrition subscale score. A higher MST score correlates to a lower Braden nutrition subscale. In collaboration with the WCNS, score discrepancies were reconciled and PIPB implemented. RDs and WCNS provided education about MST and Braden correlations with HAPI prevention. After education, RDs communicated discrepancies directly to RNs. An EMR dashboard was created to identify discrepancies between MST and Braden nutrition subscale.

Results

On the hospital unit with interprofessional collaboration, there was a 30% increase in early PIPB implementation and a 75% reduction in HAPI occurrence compared to a 25% reduction on another unit.

Conclusion

RDs, nutrition experts, are essential for accurate malnutrition risk assessment to prevent HAPIs. Interdisciplinary communication between WCNS and RDs specialists promotes improved clinical outcomes.

Notes From the Field

Research Highlights: Dr. Cooper Publishes Studies on Nutrition's Role in Mental Health and Support for Trafficked Individuals

Dr. Christen Cooper published "Registered Dietitian Nutritionists' Knowledge, Confidence, and Experiences with Treating Trafficked Individuals: A Call for Interprofessional Continuing Education" in the Journal of Dietetic Education (2.2 July, 2024).

Abstract

Background: Victims of human trafficking (HT) frequently face malnutrition, dehydration, low food security, and infections. When identified, victims of HT are normally treated with interprofessional team (IPT) care that often excludes Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs). Although RDNs are trained to treat these conditions, they may lack knowledge, confidence, and skills, for working with this population, as well as the opportunities to work on such IPTs. To date, no study has explored RDNs' knowledge of or work with individuals who are trafficked.

Objective: To explore RDNs': HT knowledge, confidence in the ability to work with victims of HT, and barriers to working with victims of HT on IPTs.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: This was a cross-sectional study involving a 43-question survey completed by RDNs (n=241) working in a variety of settings.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Descriptive statistics, chi-square analyses, and ANOVA were used to determine RDNs' knowledge of HT; level of confidence to assist victims; experience with victims; barriers to working with this population; and preferred methods of HT professional development.

Results: Participants were largely female (97%), white (97%), and over half had 10+ years of practice. More than two-thirds of participants (37%) indicated they were "not at all" confident in caring for victims of HT. Those aged 30-44 and those with 3-5 years of practice scored highest on HT knowledge. Barriers to working with victims of HT included a lack of HT education, known cases in the workplace, and full patient histories. RDNs indicated they desired more HT education and prefer webinars as a continuing education modality.

Conclusion: RDNs face multiple barriers to working with victims of HT that may be remedied with interprofessional education and support from organizations educating and supporting RDNs.

Link: ["Registered Dietitian Nutritionists' Knowledge, Confidence, and Experiences with Treating Trafficked Individuals: A Call for Interprofessional Continuing Education"](#)

Dr. Cooper also published an article with Pace alumna, Vida Velasco-Popov. Vida graduated with her M.S. in Nutrition and Dietetics in August 2024 and was the recipient of the Pace University Award for Outstanding Student of the Year. Their article "The Role of Food and Nutrition in Treating Bipolar Disorder: A Narrative Review for The Allied Health Professions" was published in Medical Research Archives (6.12, June 2024).

Abstract

This narrative review analyzes the body of literature on known physiological mechanisms impacting bipolar disorder (BD) and how patient-centered nutrition in conjunction with prescribed medications may positively impact patient health outcomes. Additional topics include understanding the current state of research on nutrition and BD, impact of specific micronutrient imbalances on BD, dietary tendencies including current research on whole dietary patterns and potential applications for patients with BD. The totality of research included in this review indicate that inflammatory processes play a central role impacting health outcomes in patients with BD which can be addressed with not only medication, but also with targeted nutrition therapy.

Link: ["The Role of Food and Nutrition in Treating Bipolar Disorder: A Narrative Review for The Allied Health Professions"](#)

Notes From the Field

Nourishing Your Holiday Spirit: Healthier Treats for the Season

The holiday season is full of tempting treats, but staying on track with your health goals doesn't mean missing out. Dr. Christen Cooper shares her expertise with U.S. News & World Report, offering nutritional tips for healthier holiday snacks and treats. Her recommendations include options tailored to a variety of dietary needs, ensuring everyone can enjoy the festive season with balanced and mindful choices. "The challenges are real but manageable," she says, advising us to celebrate without making food the centerpiece.

Simple swaps like using unsweetened applesauce or Greek yogurt in baked goods can lower fat and calories without sacrificing flavor. Creative snack ideas such as veggie skewers, no-bake energy balls, festive yogurt parfaits, and lighter dips ensure everyone can enjoy delicious yet nutritious holiday treats. Celebrate the holiday season with delicious treats that nourish your body and keep you feeling energized and healthy!

Article link: [The 8 Best Holiday Snacks and Desserts](#)



Alumni Highlights



Erika Bay

Cohort 3, Class of 2022

1. Can you describe your current role and what a typical day looks like for you?

As the founder and lead dietitian at Gut Instinct Nutrition, I provide specialized, one-on-one nutrition therapy exclusively through telehealth. A typical day consists of seeing a mix of new clients for initial consultations and returning clients for follow-ups. In initial consultations, I perform comprehensive assessments of each client's digestive health, medical background, and lifestyle, and we collaborate to develop personalized nutrition plans. During follow-up appointments, I evaluate their progress, make any necessary adjustments to their nutrition strategies, and provide ongoing support to ensure they are on track with their goals. Each interaction is tailored to meet the individual's needs, with a focus on achieving long-term improvements in digestive health and overall well-being.

2. What has been your proudest professional accomplishment so far?

One of my proudest accomplishments has been founding Gut Instinct Nutrition, and nurturing it from its inception into a thriving resource for clients. Building this practice has been a deeply rewarding journey, as I strive to provide high-quality, compassionate care for individuals navigating complex gastrointestinal conditions.

Equally significant is the privilege I've had to witness clients who once faced debilitating digestive issues regain control over their health and enhance their overall well-being through personalized nutrition therapy.

3. What advice would you offer to current students preparing for the RD exam or starting their careers?

My advice to students is twofold: First, document all of your experiences meticulously and ensure your resume highlights the skills relevant to the specific job you are pursuing. For example, my GI experience from Westchester Medical Center and Ability Beyond was instrumental in securing my role at Connecticut GI. Tailoring your resume to showcase such relevant expertise is critical. Second, learn to meet patients where they are. Nutrition counseling isn't just about providing education; it's about equipping clients with the practical tools they need to apply that education to their everyday lives. The key to successful client outcomes lies in understanding their unique challenges and developing realistic, achievable goals that meet them at their current stage of readiness for change.

4. What skills or experiences from your time at Pace have been the most valuable in your career?

My time at Pace University provided a solid foundation for my career as a dietitian. The coursework, particularly in medical nutrition therapy, gave me a deep understanding of clinical nutrition, which has been invaluable in my work with clients managing complex GI conditions. The professors were not only knowledgeable but also supportive, challenging us to think critically and apply evidence-based practices. Additionally, the hands-on experience I gained during my dietetic internship rotations was crucial. My rotations at Westchester Medical Center, in particular, exposed me to a wide range of gastrointestinal cases and allowed me to develop specialized skills in digestive health. These experiences helped shape my expertise in GI nutrition and prepared me to transition into my role at Connecticut GI and eventually launch my private practice. The combination of rigorous coursework, supportive faculty, and practical training at Pace has been instrumental in my success as a registered dietitian.

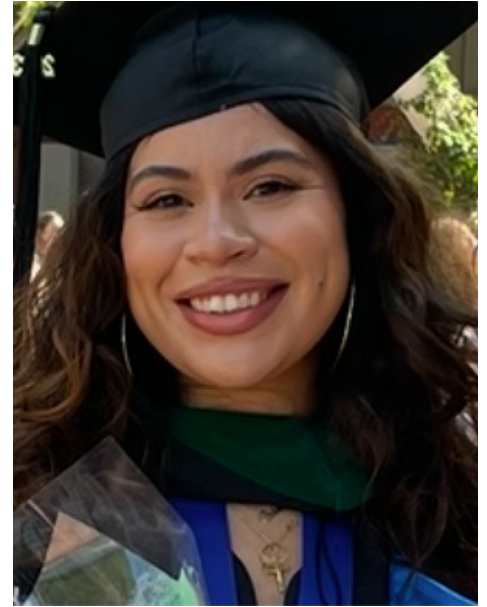
Alumni Highlights

1. What have you been doing since you graduated?

Since graduating, I have been practicing as a Clinical Dietitian. I was given the opportunity to begin my career in Long-Term Care, which was truly an incredible experience! This was a role that exposed me to so many different complex cases in the geriatric population, and allowed me to learn how to advocate for my patients/residents; and become creative with nutrition interventions for a food first approach.

2. Can you describe your current role and what a typical day looks like for you?

I currently work at Phelps Hospital, as a Registered Dietitian. In my current role, I work on the Med/Surg Units, and our in-patient Acute Rehab. My day-to-day tasks vary depending on acuity trends and priorities. The beginning of my day will be spent chart reviewing all of my patients for the day, prioritizing based on needs, and then spending time in Interdisciplinary Rounds. Rounds are a great opportunity for the team to view the patient with a collaborative approach, and advocate for patient needs and safe discharge planning. The rest of my day I spend meeting and spending time with my patients to understand their needs and how I can help from a Nutrition perspective during their hospital stay. Like many of us, I believe in a food first approach as much as the patient can tolerate, and Phelps has a wonderful Food Service team who will do what they can to help drive that.



Cassandra Moseley
Cohort 4, Class of 2023

3. What do you enjoy most about your job, and what challenges have you encountered?

The one takeaway I have every day from my job that I truly enjoy tends to be all of my patient interactions. Sometimes, your patient would just like someone to talk to and engage with, and being able to be that listening ear for that moment of their time is what I tend to enjoy the most. I would say one challenge that myself and my team encounter is lab ordering for PPN/TPN. We are currently working on advocating for efficient lab ordering/processing specifically with PN cases, as they are time sensitive orders. There has been much improvement as of late for timely labs for patient care.

4. How do you stay current with industry trends and continue growing professionally?

I find webinars extremely helpful for staying update on current trends, and looking for anything that peaks my interest to follow through on. I connect with other RDNs that share the same interests as myself and join groups to see what else other professionals are doing.

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- ★ Mindful Choices 💡
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- ★ #RD2be 🧑🏫

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Recipes Lifespan Re... Lifespan Lab Nutrition Q... Campus Ev... Field Trips

"LET FOOD BE THY MEDICINE AND MEDICINE BE THY FOOD."
- HIPPOCRATES
FOOD MATTERS

FOOD MEMBER

Madison Jacobs