



FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS
to Promote Health in Central Massachusetts



2015

Annual Report to Stakeholders



2015 UMass Worcester PRC Annual Report

To us, it is all about the people. Our work is focused on making it possible for people to make healthy choices throughout their days and lives.

Guided by our Advisory Committee, we partner with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Worcester Division of Public Health, and many local organizations. From Union Hill to Beacon Hill, our research, evaluation, and technical assistance address urgent issues in Worcester and the state of Massachusetts, and also extend nationwide.

As the report shows, our work seeks to help people and communities be healthier. We accomplish this work through collaborative teams of community partners, faculty, staff, post-doctoral trainees, doctoral and medical students, undergraduates, and high school students. Each team member makes vital and unique contributions to our shared work.

We are pleased to share with you some of the 2015 highlights from the UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center!

Best,

Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD
Co-Director



Milagros C. Rosal, PhD
Co-Director

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Our vision is Optimal health among Greater Worcester residents.

Our mission is to improve health through lifestyle changes including greater physical activity and healthy eating, and achieving or maintaining a healthy weight. We do this by partnering with people, organizations and communities to research strategies that support healthy behaviors.

Advisory Committee

Our Advisory Committee guides our work, with valuable insight from diverse perspectives. We follow our Principles of Partnership, and maintain open channels of communication. During 2015, we interviewed each community partner to get a better understanding of their views on specific strategic areas. We discussed current practices, and how we could support their work in the following areas:

- Implementing research studies
- Accessing data
- Evaluating programs
- Integrating evidence-based research into practice
- Sharing UMass Medical School's academic resources and information
- How we communicate and form partnerships

As a result of these conversations, we are doing new activities together:

- Partnering with the UMass Medical School's Lamar Soutter Library for training on conducting literature searches, finding evidence-based practices, and keeping current with new research
- Creating a training series to improve community members' understanding of research, such as the value and goals of research, and various research methods
- Seeking to improve visibility through sharing of research results and social media

We would like to thank each Advisory Committee member, and UMass faculty and staff!

Community Partners

UMass PRC Faculty and Staff

Joanne Calista, MSW
Executive Director
Center for Health Impact

Liz Sheehan Castro
Director of Advocacy
Worcester County Food
Bank

Zach Dyer, MPH
Deputy Director
Worcester Division of
Public Health

**Karin Valentine Goins,
MPH**
Co-Founder
WalkBike Worcester

Judi Kirk, MSPE
Director of Community
Impact
Boys & Girls Club of
Worcester

Mónica Escobar Lowell
Vice President Community
Relations
UMass Memorial Health
Care

Toni McGuire, RN, MPH
President and CEO
Edward M. Kennedy
Community Health Center

Mullen Sawyer
Executive Director
Oak Hill Community
Development Corporation

Shelly Yarnie, MPH
Regional Director
Massachusetts
Department of Public
Health

Faculty

Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD
Co-Director, UMass Worcester PRC
Professor of Medicine
Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Milagros C. Rosal, PhD
Co-Director, UMass Worcester PRC
Professor of Medicine
Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Suzanne Cashman, ScD
Professor
Family Medicine and Community Health

Wenjun Li, PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine (Biostatistics) Division of Preventive
and Behavioral Medicine

Judy Ockene, PhD, MA
Professor of Medicine and Chief Division of Preventive and Behavioral
Medicine

Sherry Pagoto, PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine Division of Preventive and Behavioral
Medicine

Lori Pbert, PhD
Professor of Medicine Associate Chief
Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Staff

Amy Borg, MPH, MEd
Center Coordinator, UMass Worcester PRC
Project Director, Healthy Kids & FamiliesTM

Christine Frisard, MS
Biostatistician II
Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Karen Ronayne
Research Coordinator
Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine

Healthy Kids & Families™ project is launched!



Raising children is a wonderful challenge. Parents hear lots of advice and expectations, and juggle many competing demands for time and attention. To support families, we have successfully launched our Healthy Kids & Families™ project, which is the UMass Worcester PRC's applied research project in Worcester.

In 2015, families with children at Union Hill Elementary School were invited to participate in a program that helps families with healthy eating, physical activity and healthy weight.

Families with children at Grafton Street Elementary School were invited to participate in a program that helps their children get along well with others. We will reach out to more schools in 2016.

Families in each program are coached on how to improve their families' health in ways that are relevant to the program goals. Both programs use the same format:

- Coach visits and telephone calls
- Community events that promote the use of local resources
- Newsletters with ideas and information
- Private Facebook groups to encourage connection and support among families in each program

In 2015, Milagros Rosal, PhD and Wenjun, Li, PhD led teams of community partners, faculty, staff, and students as they prepared to implement the study. Together, they created evidence-based intervention protocols, and adapted validated study measures. The teams tested the intervention protocols and study measures with people from similar neighborhoods to make sure that they were clear, appropriate, and useful. Finally, the new staff began to enroll interested families!

Here are some of the people who are working to make this research project a success!



Marline Ruiz, Coach



Curriculum developers Christina Houghton, and Girls Inc. interns Amanda and Princilla



Assessment Team Valerie Silfee, PhD, Andrea Lopez-Cepero, Meera Sreedhara, Jessica Carrion Reyes



Our office at Oak Hill Community Development Corporation

An Interview with Karin Valentine Goins

Co-Founder of WalkBike Worcester
Project Coordinator for UMass Worcester PRC's Physical Activity Policy Research Network project called PAPRN+
UMass Worcester PRC Advisory Committee Member

Can you tell us about your different roles with the community and UMass Worcester PRC? Let's start with WalkBike Worcester. What is it all about?

WalkBike Worcester is a group that brings together community organizations and Worcester residents who are eager to see our city become safer and friendlier to walkers and cyclists.

Can you tell us about your main research project that you do with us, called PAPRN+?

The built environment, such as roads, parks, and recreational areas can promote physical activity. The purpose of our PAPRN+ project is to help local health department officials participate in policy decisions about transportation and how to use local land. We are doing this by defining the roles and responsibilities that they could have in the process, as well as capabilities and training preference,. Our goal is to help them be part of the decisions so that roads, parks, and recreational areas can be designed to promote physical activity.

How did this current project come about?

In 2012, Dr. Stephenie Lemon and I implemented a PAPRN study of municipal officials' participation in local policy decisions for land use, transportation and parks. We found that health officials were rarely involved in making these decisions. In collaboration with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), we determined that a next step would be to equip local health departments with a variety of resources so that they can participate in decisions about transportation and local land use.

Snapshot:



PAPRN+, the Physical Activity Policy Research Network

The UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center is a member of the Physical Activity and Policy Research Network Plus project. Our team is leading research related to municipal officials' involvement in local built environment policy processes.

**UMass Worcester PRC
Faculty Principal Investigator:
Stephenie Lemon, PhD**

Partners:

Funder: CDC

Dates: 2014-2019

Who are your partners? How did these partnerships start?

We have both academic and other partners in this work. Our academic partners are from Texas A&M University, Georgia State University, Kansas State University, University of New Hampshire, UMass Amherst Transportation Research Center, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Other partners include NACCHO and a group called ChangeLab Solutions.

What might come next after this project?

We would like to implement an intervention project to train health department officials to do this policy work.

As a community partner AND a researcher, what do you find fulfilling?

I like bringing the practice issues to the research and vice versa. I enjoy recruiting and building relationships with non-traditional partners. These partners include local and state land use and transportation officials and researchers from other academic disciplines.

What other research interests do you have?

I'm interested in adapting urban interventions for rural areas. I have lived my whole adult life in cities but spent virtually all my vacation time in rural areas. I would love to see work on creating non-motorized connections among places in rural areas, like the system of footpaths in the United Kingdom.

What kinds of things do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?

I like to do many forms of physical activity – walking, hiking, swimming, yoga, running, dancing, badminton, Frisbee to name a few. I also enjoy reading, board and card games, puzzles, and hearing live music. I love helping my kids grow up!

Are you interested in learning more? Follow WalkBike Worcester on Facebook!



Here are a few other Facebook feeds to check out!

- CityLab
- 8 80 Cities
- Active Living Research
- Active Living by Design
- Streetsblog USA
- SmartGrowth America
- National Complete Streets Coalition (SGA program)
- Transportation Nation
- Alliance for Biking and Walking
- AmericaWalks
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Rails to Trails Conservancy
- The Open Streets Project
- The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

Using Mindfulness to Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Among Teens



Elena Salmoirago-Blotcher, PhD, MD
Lori Pbert, PhD

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.
Jon Kabat-Zinn

Snapshot:



Mindfulness Training to Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity in Teens

This two-year feasibility study uses a randomized controlled trial design to compare two interventions to improve diet, physical activity, and impulsivity among 9th graders. The study compares traditional health education classes to traditional health education plus mindfulness training.

Principal Investigators: Lori Pbert, PhD (UMass) and Elena Salmoirago-Blotcher, PhD, MD (Brown)

Partners: High schools in Chicopee, MA

Funder: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Dates: 2014-2016

Can we teach teens to use mindfulness as a way to promote healthy eating and physical activity?

UMass Worcester PRC's Lori Pbert, PhD and colleague Elena Salmoirago-Blotcher, PhD, MD wanted to know if teens would be interested in learning about and using mindfulness to help them make healthy choices. If so, would it help them to eat healthier and to be more physically active?

Their study has three guiding questions:

- Will we be able to recruit teens into the study, and will they stay in the study?
- Will the program help teens eat healthier foods and be more active?
- How do mindfulness and health education work together to influence what teens choose to eat and their physical activity? As a group, teens are often known for being impulsive – how does this intervention influence how impulsive a teen is?

Who are your partners? How did these partnerships start?

Our partners in this trial include two high schools in Chicopee, Massachusetts and their health education teachers. We have a long history of collaborating on research with schools across the state and chose these two schools for their exemplary history of research collaboration.

How did this current project come about?

We are very interested in using mindfulness training to assist various groups of people in making health behavior changes, such as to quit smoking. We are also interested in using mindfulness to help people improve their chronic conditions, such as asthma. For example, our studies have used mindfulness training to help patients with difficult-to-control asthma successfully improve their asthma symptoms and quality of life. We also have used mindfulness to assist adolescent smokers in their efforts to quit, and to help patients with implanted cardiac defibrillators improve their anxiety and quality of life.

In other studies, we have designed and evaluated school-based interventions with children and adolescents to help them eat healthier foods and be more active, and have implemented other interventions with pediatricians as they work with overweight children and teens.

We became curious about blending these two areas, applying mindfulness training to the challenge of helping teens improve their diet and physical activity.

What might come next after this project?

We are currently analyzing the data from this study and plan to propose a larger 5-year trial to further evaluate the potential benefits of mindfulness training in helping teens improve their planning skills, reduce their impulsivity, and improve their health behaviors.

What other research interests do you have?

Dr. Pbert's research interests include the design and evaluation of practical, sustainable strategies to support health behavior change that can be integrated into clinical and community settings; the prevention and treatment of tobacco dependence and obesity in youth and adults; and the role of mindfulness training in health behavior change and chronic disease management.

Dr. Salmoirago-Blotcher's research interests include the role of mindfulness training in the promotion of behavioral change; mind/body interventions for the promotion of cardiovascular health; psycho-behavioral determinants of cardiovascular disease; and women's health.

What kinds of things do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?

Drs. Pbert and Salmoirago-Blotcher both enjoy traveling and nature hikes with their families.

Making a *Fresh Start*

Have you ever been inspired to make a change in your life after hearing someone's personal story? This is the very idea behind *Fresh Start*.

A woman who has been pregnant has experienced many changes in her body, including weight gain. Many also struggle with being able to lose the weight after a baby is born. Recognizing that weight loss during the first few months postpartum is particularly important, UMass Worcester

PRC's Milagros Rosal, PhD and Stephenie Lemon, PhD partnered with the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) of Worcester and Massachusetts to design *Fresh Start*, a weight loss intervention for WIC clients.

Fresh Start created videos of women telling their personal stories about their weight loss journeys after pregnancy. Their stories were designed to be used in the *Fresh Start* study to spark discussion among women participating in weight loss intervention groups. As it is a study, half the women were randomly assigned to attend these groups and the other half received weight loss materials by mail for their own use.

Snapshot:



The Fresh Start Trial

This study aims to assess the effectiveness and implementation of a culturally adapted weight loss intervention for low-income, post-partum women participating in the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) through a randomized controlled trial.

Principal Investigators: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD

Funder: Center for Health Equity Intervention Research, National Institute of Health, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities P60 MD006912

Fresh Start promoted achieving and maintaining a healthy weight through physical activity and eating low-calorie foods. As part of the program, women had a free membership to the YWCA of Central Massachusetts, and so could use the gym, swim in the pool, and attend fitness classes. It was exciting to watch as women in the groups planned to go to the Y together, and encouraged each other to be more active.

To provide a healthy meal at each group session, *Fresh Start* established a partnership with the Food Services Management program at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester. For each of 48 intervention group meetings, students in the Nutrition and Food Services programs planned and prepared a 500-calorie meal, and provided recipes and nutrition information. As much as possible, menus featured foods that WIC clients could obtain for free through the WIC program. Participants, their older children and the *Fresh Start* staff enjoyed a wide variety of dishes including Dijon and parmesan baked fish, farmer's market vegetarian quesadillas, cauliflower crust pizza, spicy tuna cakes, Greek baked chicken, Moroccan shepherd's pie, sweet potato pudding, strawberry-banana "ice cream" and light pumpkin spice bars.

In 2015, the study finished recruiting a total of 139 women for six groups that met eight times each. Each participant completed a baseline assessment when she enrolled, and two follow-up assessments. Collection of follow-up data is now underway and will be completed early in 2017.



Using Science to Support Public Health Practice



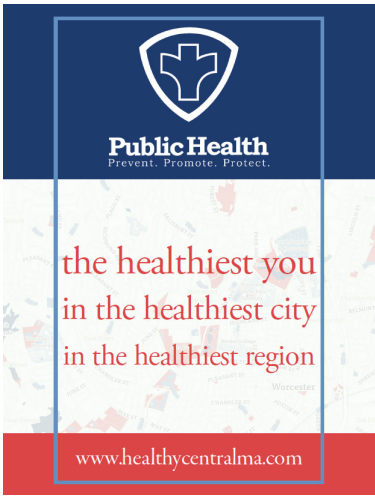
Many coalitions are working together to make the Greater Worcester area a healthier community. Making bike lines in newly paved streets, increasing access to healthy foods through farmers markets, and ensuring that school playgrounds are available for neighborhood children are recent examples of changes in Worcester to encourage healthy lifestyles. UMass Worcester PRC faculty and staff are actively engaged in many of these efforts throughout central Massachusetts, providing technical assistance and using science to inform practice.

Zach Dyer (City of Worcester Division of Public Health), Mónica Escobar Lowell (UMass Memorial Health Care), Karyn Clark (City of Worcester Division of Public Health), (Kimberly Soloman at release of the Community Health Assessment

Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan and the Community Health Assessment

The Worcester Division of Public Health, UMass Memorial Health Care, Fallon Health, and many community coalitions lead these changes through the Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). In 2015, the community coalitions completed one Greater Worcester CHIP, and implemented a new Community Health Assessment that will lay the foundation for the new Greater Worcester CHIP.

The Greater Worcester CHIP truly guides public health efforts in the region, as many agencies align their own efforts with its identified targets. In 2015, the City of Worcester Division of Public Health (on behalf of the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance), UMass Memorial Healthcare and Fallon Health led the 2015 Community Health Assessment. UMass Worcester PRC faculty and staff provided technical assistance to the process, with Dr. Lemon, Dr. Cashman, and Ms. Borg serving on the Advisory Committee. Following the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework, the Greater Worcester CHA team used interviews, focus groups, group discussions, surveys, and interactive sessions at community events to reach over 2000 people to elicit thoughts on health priorities and concerns from residents in Grafton, Holden, Leicester, Millbury, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston and the City of Worcester. The team then scoured every available data source including the U.S. Census; the U.S. CDC’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s MassCHIP (Massachusetts Community Health Information Profile) system; mortality and birth records; Essential School Health Services reports from local school districts, and other national, state, county, and town datasets. Many additional existing reports, including the Regional Youth Health Survey, also were used. The Advisory Committee then sorted through the information to set priority areas, and invited community members to develop workplans for each of the nine priority areas.



In addition to being part of this process, the Mass Worcester PRC contributes to the shared Greater Worcester CHIP goals via implementation teams. Dr. Lemon and Ms. Frisard partnered with the Worcester Division of Public Health to create the survey forms and analyze the results of the Youth Survey for areas schools.



The Skin Smart Campus Initiative

Even though indoor tanning increases the risk of developing skin cancer, many young adults visit indoor tanning booths. UMass Worcester PRC's Dr. Sherry Pagoto and team found that almost half (48%) of colleges had indoor tanning facilities either on campus, in off-campus housing, or both. They are now leading the Skin Smart Campus Initiative to take action in deterring colleges and universities from supporting indoor tanning facilities on campus, in off-campus housing, and the use of cash cards for tanning.



The US Surgeon General took notice of this research in its 2014 Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer. As part of this work, it partnered with the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention to create the Skin Smart Campus Initiative. The Skin Smart Campus Initiative is using the model set by the tobacco-free campus initiative to encourage U.S. universities and colleges to promote skin cancer prevention policies and education on campus.

The Skin Smart Campus Initiative presents Skin Smart Campus Awards to colleges and universities that have demonstrated a commitment to skin cancer prevention and the ongoing health of their students.

To be considered for this award, the campus must meet specific criteria, such as eliminating indoor tanning salons on campus or in college buildings (gyms, student centers, dormitories etc.) or not allowing students to use cash cards to pay for indoor tanning sessions. The campuses must offer educational programs and create policies that prohibit indoor tanning on campus.

Look for the Skin Cancer Campus posts and tweets on Facebook and Twitter to stay updated on recent research, programs, legislation, and actions!

Collaboration between the UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Science and the UMass Worcester PRC

The UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Science (UMCCTS), funded by the National Institute of Health, is a natural partner within UMass Medical School. As Drs. Stephenie Lemon and Cashman are Co-Directors of the UMCCTS Community Engagement and Research Section, its work is closely aligned with the PRC.

In Worcester, the UMCCTS Community Engagement and Research Section is creating Community-Based Research Networks to link UMass researchers with community partners, embedding research into the Greater Worcester Community

Health Improvement Plan. In this way, we will be able to better incorporate evidence-based practices into the adoption of new programs, and to further research in new areas. The UMCCTS Community Engagement and Research Section and the UMass Worcester PRC complement each other, in that the PRC focuses on promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and the Community Engagement and Research Section promotes applied research in other areas.

A second link between the UMass Worcester PRC and UMCCTS is the Special Population Resource Center. Its goal is to increase engagement of special populations in translational research through tailored, culturally responsive strategies. The Special Population Resource Center defines special populations as those not well represented in translational research because of age (i.e., children and the elderly), race/ethnicity, low socioeconomic status, geographic location (rural or urban), or being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT). SPRC is co-led by community members and researchers. Drs. Milagros Rosal and Lemon are also leaders in the Special Population Research Center.

Snapshot:



Community Engagement and Research Special Populations Resource Center University of Massachusetts Clinical and Translational Science Award

This award enhances the capacity of University of Massachusetts Medical School to conduct clinical and translational research by strengthening its infrastructure. The Community Engagement and Research section aims to enhance academic and community capacity to address urgent health priorities among communities in Massachusetts using community engaged research approaches. It will do this by establishing regional community-based research networks (CBRN) and junior faculty training programs. The Special Population Resource Center seeks to engage special populations in clinical and translational research with strategies that reach out to investigators and community members using tailored, culturally responsive methods.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigators: Stephenie Lemon, PhD, Suzanne Cashman, ScD, Milagros C. Rosal, PhD
Funder: National Institutes of Health
Dates: 2015-2019



Getting to Know UMass Worcester PRC's Post-Doctoral Fellow, Valerie Silfee, PhD

What interested you in coming to UMass and the UMass Worcester PRC?



I was interested in coming to the PRC because I am passionate about improving physical activity and health behaviors in community settings for chronic disease prevention and treatment. I am particularly interested in fighting the obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease crises we are facing by targeting physical activity in communities at higher risk for disease. I have a PhD in Kinesiology and I am a certified Exercise Physiologist by the American College of Sports Medicine. With previous research and training focused on efficacy trials and physiology, I wanted to expand my skills and expertise in behavioral interventions, community-based participatory research, and health behavior theory by better understanding strategies for promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

What research projects are you working on with the UMass Worcester PRC?

I am working on a few projects in the PRC. First, I am working on analyzing data and writing manuscripts related to a cross-sectional study of Latino adults in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Specifically, I am exploring relationships between sedentary behavior and physical activity and modifiable cardiovascular disease risk factors.

I am also currently helping out with the Fresh Start study, a clinical trial for postpartum weight loss targeting low-income women. I observed the group sessions each week and reviewed all of the protocol materials. I also am also working on translating the intervention and developing a Facebook intervention for the same population.

Finally, I am beginning to develop my pilot study in order to obtain pilot data for a K award application. This pilot study will involve testing the feasibility and effectiveness of a behavioral intervention to promote physical activity among underserved populations in faith-based organizations. Over the next several months, I plan to build partnerships with local church leaders and members and conduct focus groups in order to better understand the overall culture of their organizations as it relates to health behaviors. I will then design and test the feasibility of a behavioral intervention by measuring factors such as fidelity, cultural acceptability, and satisfaction. Finally, I will use the feedback I receive to modify the intervention for pilot testing.

Who is your mentor? How did this match come about?

My mentors are Dr. Stephenie Lemon and Dr. Milagros Rosal. This match came about because Drs. Lemon and Rosal are both experts in the field promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors within communities. I believe that with their expertise and guidance, I will be able to develop the skills I need to achieve my long-term career goals.

What do you hope to do when you finish your post doc?

When I complete this Post Doc, I am hoping to secure a tenure-track faculty position at a research institution. I would like to continue to conduct research in theory-based behavioral interventions to promote physical activity and combat chronic disease while also teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in topics such as health promotion, health behavior theory, and physical activity behavior.

What has been a surprise for you?

A surprise to me has been how many people it truly takes to run a successful research study and intervention program.

Reflections of Christina Haughton, Doctoral Student in the Clinical and Population Health Research (CPHR) Program

The CPHR doctoral research program trains students to translate research into effective disease prevention programs, clinical practice and policy. Students learn by doing, and are actively involved in a variety of research projects.

What research projects are you working on with the UMass Worcester PRC?

I am gaining experiences in obesity prevention and health disparities research through interventions, particularly among populations that face greater health burdens from racial and economic disparities.

The Fresh Start project is a weight loss intervention among postpartum women. All the women are low-income and participate in the Worcester WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program.

The Healthy Kids & Families™ project is a study among children and their families in an underserved community. The project compares two community-based interventions that utilize local resources to promote healthy dietary and activity behaviors and support positive child behaviors.

My role in these projects provide the opportunity to be integrated within a multi-disciplinary team and to develop skill sets across the research continuum, including qualitative research, intervention development and implementation, survey design, data management and statistical analysis and manuscript writing.

My mentor is Stephenie Lemon, PhD.



What is your dissertation topic?

This is still being determined but it will be set around understanding the influence of parental and child weight and dietary perceptions and the impact on child health behaviors.

What do you hope to do when you graduate?

After graduation, I hope to continue to research child and family health behaviors as risk factors for prevention of future chronic diseases later in life.

What has been a surprise for you?

Everyone has been great to work with!

Andrea Lopez-Cepero, student in the Pathways to Graduate School at the Clinical Investigation and Population Health Research Program

Why did you come to UMass?

My research interests include nutritional and behavioral factors of chronic diseases, specifically among the Latino population. In addition, I am interested in developing intervention programs to treat and prevent these diseases and to eliminate health disparities. The quality and the variety of projects in this field that are being conducted at the PRC, as well as the commitment of the research staff to the different ongoing projects, motivated me to join this group for my graduate studies.



What kinds of research do you do?

I am currently working with data from the Latino Health and Well-being Study where I am studying eating behaviors and risk of cardiovascular disease. In addition, I am also participating in other research projects like the Fresh Start and Healthy Kids & Families™ program

My mentor is Dr. Milagros Rosal. I first contacted Dr. Rosal to do a summer rotation in 2014, while I was still a master's student at the University of Puerto Rico. After this great experience as a summer intern with the PRC, Dr. Rosal continued to be my mentor during my master's degree and still continues to be now that I am a student at UMass Medical School.

What do you hope to do when you finish your PhD?

My short-term goal after I finish my PhD is to continue gaining experience in the field of Latino health disparities through a post-doctoral position in Academia. After this, my long-term goals are to do research in Academia and collaborate with multidisciplinary research teams to translate research into interventions that target disease risk factors among Latinos. Last but not least, one of my priorities is to mentor students from a minority background --like mine-- that are interested in a career in science.

2015 Research Projects

Child & Family Health

The Fresh Start Trial, Center for Health Equity in Research

This study aims to assess the effectiveness and implementation of a culturally adapted weight loss intervention for low-income, postpartum women participating in the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) through a randomized controlled trial.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD

Funder: Center for Health Equity Intervention Research, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Dates: 2012-2017

Intervention to Reduce Children's Televised Food Advertising Exposure

This study will assess the feasibility of implementing and assessing the potential effects of a commercial-free television programming service in the homes of families with children aged 3-6 years old. Outcomes include child pestering for energy-dense foods and parental purchasing of energy-dense foods.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2017

Health Equity

UMass Center for Health Equity Intervention Research (CHEIR)

This collaboration between UMass Worcester and UMass Boston establishes a Center for Minority Health. This center provides infrastructure to identify, train, mentor and foster the career development of minority students and faculty and in general individuals with interests in health disparities interventional research. It provides an infrastructure support to faculty interested in developing research ideas aimed to reduce and eliminate health disparities through an administrative, a research and a community engagement cores.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Dates: 2012 - 2017

Community Engagement Core, Center for Health Equity Intervention Research (CHEIR)

This core is supporting community engagement activities in affiliated projects. It also includes an independent project intended to advance the field of community engaged science through the development, dissemination, and evaluation of an innovative, culturally responsive video storytelling intervention to increase research literacy among community members.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: Center for Health Equity Intervention Research, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Dates: 2012-2017

Community Engagement and Research

University of Massachusetts Clinical and Translational Science Award (UMCCTS)

The Community Engagement and Research Section enhances academic and community capacity to address urgent health priorities among communities in Massachusetts using community-engaged research approaches. It establishes regional community-based research networks (CBRN) and junior faculty training programs.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Stephenie Lemon, PhD, Suzanne Cashman, ScD

Partners:

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2019

Special Populations Resource Center

University of Massachusetts Clinical and Translational Science Award (UMCCTS)

The Special Population Resource Center seeks to engage special populations in clinical and translational research with strategies that reach out to investigators and community members using tailored, culturally responsive methods.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2019

Health Care Reform and Disparities in the Care and Outcomes of Trauma Patients

This project evaluates the impact of Health Care Reform on the reduction of disparities in trauma care.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health/ National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Dates: 2011-2016

Social Determinants of Health

This project investigates personal and community predictors of health status and medical expenditures of MassHealth subscribers.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: MassHealth (Massachusetts Medicaid)

Dates: 2014-2016

Collaborative Research: Institutional Networks and Continuous Learning to UnDo Effects of Micro-inequities on Women (INCLUDE-Women)

The focus of this project is quantify and address bias that affects the culture and thus the advancement of women into visible STEM leadership roles in research, professional societies, and leadership. This will make a substantial contribution to the institutional transformation knowledge base for subsequent applications to National Science Foundation.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Judith Ockene, PhD

Partner: UMass Lowell and UMass Worcester

Funder: National Science Foundation

Dates: 2012-2016

Stress, Psychological Distress, Social Support and Mental and Physical Health Care Utilization among Puerto Ricans in Massachusetts and Puerto Rico

This pilot study aims to: 1) compare the prevalence of stress (measured at the individual, partner/family, social and larger community levels) elevated depression and anxiety symptom reporting, and sources of social support, between Puerto Ricans residing in Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans residing in Massachusetts; and 2) explore associations between these measures and physical and mental health care service utilization.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences - Seed Money for Translational Research

Dates: 2014-2015

Obesity & Mental Health

Barriers and Facilitators of Mental Health Services Utilization among Latinos

Using a community-engaged research approach, this study is to empirically assess the association of individual, partner/family, social context and larger community stressors and sources of support on markers of physical and mental health and health care utilization among low-income Latinos.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD and Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health

Dates: 2011-2016

Get Social: Randomized Trial of a Social Network Delivered Lifestyle Intervention

The purpose of the present study is to conduct a randomized controlled trial to compare the efficacy of an online social network delivered intervention to a traditional in-person group-based lifestyle intervention. We hypothesize that an online social network intervention will not be inferior to the traditional delivery approach.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2020

Impulsivity and Weight Gain During Pregnancy: The Roles of Excess Energy Intake, Food Reward Sensitivity, and the Food Environment

The goal of this project is to examine whether impulsivity plays a role in excessive gestational weight gain in a cohort of 125 pregnant women.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: UMCCTS Pilot Project Program, National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2013-2015

Feasibility and Acceptability of a Post-Partum Weight Loss Intervention Delivered via Facebook

The proposed project is a pilot study to test the feasibility and acceptability of a postpartum weight loss intervention delivered via Facebook. Results will include information on recruitment and retention, engagement, participant satisfaction with the intervention, and weight loss.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: Joseph P. Healey Endowment Fund

Dates: 2014-2015

Development and Feasibility of a Primary Care-Based Online Weight Loss Intervention Platform

This project will develop and test usability, feasibility, and acceptability of this web-based weight loss intervention designed for delivery in primary care. This work will lay the foundation for a 2-arm randomized controlled trial comparing the efficacy of the intervention for weight loss compared with a self-directed comparison condition.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2018

Randomized Lifestyle Intervention in Overweight and Obese Pregnant Hispanic Women

The overall goal of this randomized clinical trial is to test the efficacy of a culturally and linguistically modified, individually-tailored lifestyle intervention to reduce excessive gestational weight gain, increase postpartum weight loss, and improve maternal metabolic status among overweight/obese Hispanic women.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD and Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Dates: 2013-2018

Mind and Health: Developing a Neural Marker for Mindfulness, a Pathway to Health

This randomized clinical trial will study a neural marker for the impact of mindfulness and will explore the impact of mindfulness on maintenance of weight loss.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

Dates: 2013-2016

Built Environment & Policy

UMass Worcester PRC PAPER+ Collaborating Center

This grant re-establishes the UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center as a member of the Physical Activity and Policy Research Network Plus. Our team is leading research related to municipal officials' involvement in local built environment policy processes.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Stephenie Lemon, PhD,

Funder: Centers for Disease Control

Dates: 2014-2019

Community Clinical Linkages

RELAX: A Mobile Application Suite Targeting Obesity and Stress

The purpose of this proposal is to develop and test the feasibility and proof-of-concept of RELAX Application Suite (AS), a mobile-, cloud- and web-based companion to a brief visit lifestyle intervention for obese individuals. RELAX-AS will be designed to reduce clinical visit time and cost by identifying and displaying behavior patterns that account for the greatest deviations in energy balance.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2014-2017

Feasibility Trial of a Problem-Solving Weight Loss Mobile Application

This project will develop and test the feasibility of Smart Coach, a weight loss mobile application that includes common features such as self-monitoring, goal setting, and a social network. Most importantly, it will also feature an avatar-facilitated, idiographic problem solving feature that processes information intelligently to help patients identify solutions to their weight loss problems.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Funder: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Dates: 2013-2016

Likes Pins and Views: Engaging Moms on Teen Indoor Tanning Thru Social Media

This study will develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a social media indoor tanning campaign to decrease mothers' permissiveness for, and prevalence of, indoor tanning by daughters and increase mothers' support for policy restrictions on indoor tanning by minors to improve the effectiveness of indoor tanning regulations.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2020

Mentoring in mHealth and Social Networking Interventions for CVD Risk Reduction

This mid-career development award is designed to support a mentorship plan in mHealth research for cardiovascular disease prevention that leverages the resources and transdisciplinary faculty of the UMass Center for mHealth.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: NHBLI

Dates: 2015-2020

Center for mHealth-Based Behavioral Sensing and Interventions

This center grant is to provide the resources for investigators to create an intercampus mHealth research center at the University of Massachusetts.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: UMass President's Science and Technology Fund

Dates: 2012-no end

An Appearance-Based Intervention to Reduce Teen Skin Cancer Risk

This randomized trial will test an internet-delivered, web-based intervention to reduce teen skin cancer risk.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Cancer Institute

Dates: 2010-2015

Using Social Media to Prevent Teen Marijuana Use: A family Intervention in a State with Adult-Legal Cannabis

An interdisciplinary team of researchers will evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a social media marijuana prevention intervention for Colorado's families.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2020

Other Wellness

Tobacco

Smoking Cessation in 10 Medical Schools

Brief physician-delivered tobacco treatment, commonly known as “the 5As”, is an evidence-based intervention demonstrated to double a smoker’s likelihood of quitting. Given that 70% of smokers see a physician each year, it is imperative that all clinicians have the appropriate knowledge and skill level to counsel smokers. However, few physicians and physicians-in-training receive adequate training to develop these skills. Using a pair-matched, randomized group-controlled (RGC) design (implemented in 10 medical schools), we are comparing two methods of teaching the 5As to medical students: 1) traditional medical education (TE), and 2) multi-modal education (MME) that adds two components to TE: a web-based instructional program for students and preceptor training. The primary outcome is observed tobacco treatment counseling skill of medical students as measured by the Objective Structured Clinical Examination. A secondary outcome is self-reported tobacco treatment counseling skill level.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Judith Ockene, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute

Dates: 2009-2015

Statistical Evaluation of the Community Tobacco Control Programs

This project provides statistical evaluation of the outcomes and progress of various programs and sample surveys managed by Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Dates: 2010-2016

Implementation Research Training Program in Cancer Prevention and Control

This education and training grant will establish a postdoctoral training program at UMMS focused on community and clinical implementation science in cancer prevention and control.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD, Milagros C. Rosal, PhD

Funder: National Cancer Institute

Dates: 2014-2019

Continuation of the Nicotine Dependence in Teens (NDIT) Study to Age 30

The study will follow the use of tobacco products, quit attempts, and genetic and environmental factors among study participants. It extends the ability to follow-participants until they are 30 years old, and develop intervention tools.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Lori Pbert, PhD

Partners: University of Montreal (O’Loughlin)

Funder: Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute

Dates: 2015-2019

School-Based Waterpipe Smoking Cessation Intervention Program among Jordanian Adolescents

This study tests the effectiveness of a behavioral counseling program that 5As guidelines with students in Jordan who smoke waterpipes.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Lori Pbert, PhD

Partners: American University of Beirut (Lebanon) (Alzyoud)

Funder: American University of Beirut Research Grant

Dates: 2015-2016

Testing Skin Cancer Prevention Messages Targeted to High Priority At-Risk Adults

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a significant contributing factor to skin cancer, yet sunburns, tanning, and unprotected sun exposure remain prevalent. The proposed study will develop and test health messages for key segments of the population who are understudied but at elevated risk for skin cancer. This work will produce a library of evidence-based skin cancer prevention messages for use in public health campaigns.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2015-2019

Pilot Investigation of Behavioral Alternatives to Indoor Tanning

This study will determine whether incentivizing indoor tanners' engagement in healthy alternative behaviors that enhance appearance (sunless tanning) and reduce stress (yoga) will decrease their indoor tanning.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2012-2015

Transdisciplinary Training in Cardiovascular Research

The goals of this program are to train pre- and postdoctoral fellows in cardiovascular research that spans basic science to the T2+ translational arenas.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health

Dates: 2013-2018

Asthma Symptom Management Through Mindfulness Training

The goal of this study is to evaluate the effect of participation in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction compared to an active control on asthma symptom control and the role of mindfulness, psychosocial, and biological processes in intervention-related changes.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Lori Pbert, PhD, Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health /NCCAM

Dates: 2014-2019

Women in Control 2.0: Virtual World Diabetes Self-Management Education for Minority Women

This randomized clinical trial will compare the effectiveness of a virtual world-based vs. a face-to-face diabetes self-management intervention. The study population will be African American/Black and Latina women with uncontrolled type 2 diabetes.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Dates: 2015-2020

Arteriosclerosis Risk Factor Reduction in Ecuador: Training Primary Care Physicians in Behavioral Counseling and Establishing Office Support and Patient Follow-up Systems

This study will adapt, refine and assess the feasibility of using an evidence-based cardiovascular risk prevention intervention model within Ecuadorian primary care settings, and will test the effect of the intervention approach on risk factor reduction, including: reduction in lipids, weight loss, HgbA1C in diabetics, appropriate guideline-driven prescription of statin medications, and continued adherence to medication by patients.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD

Funder: Pfizer, Inc.

Dates: 2014-2016

Assessment of Awareness of and Reimbursement Readiness for Diabetes Prevention Program

This project will review the literature related to dissemination of diabetes prevention programs and will assess insurer willingness to cover DPP as a health benefit or as a wellness benefit.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Milagros C. Rosal, PhD

Partner: Department of Public Health (PI: Santarelli)

Funder: Massachusetts CDC, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Dates: 2015

Development of Healthy Pregnancy mHealth Interventions in Peru

This pilot study is exploring the psychosocial and cultural factors impeding maternal care during pregnancy to inform the adaptation of an evidence-based text-based intervention to improve pregnancy outcomes.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Sherry Pagoto, PhD, Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Partners: Partners in Health, Peru; UMass Lowell

Funder: UMMS, Office of Global Health

Dates: 2014-2015

Evaluation of Prevention Wellness Trust Fund Worksite Wellness Programs

This project provides evaluation of the outcomes and progress of Massachusetts Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund worksite wellness programs.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Dates: 2015-2016

Massachusetts Surveillance Quality Improvement (MA-SQI) Project

The MA Surveillance Quality Improvement project (MA-SQI) will establish and carry out activities to assess and improve the quality of injury data collected in the state's administrative databases including the MA Hospital Discharge Database (HDD), the MA Emergency Department Discharge (EDD) database, and the MA Multiple Cause-of-Death (MCOB) file. MA-SQI will conduct rigorous investigations on an annual basis to evaluate E-code completeness, accuracy, and reliability in these databases by reviewing a sample of medical records for selected priority areas, for example, to assess E-codes within the databases pre- and post- ICD-10-CM implementation, make comparisons by hospital and patient characteristics, examine bias in coding, and assess documentation.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Partners: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Funder: Centers for Disease Control

Dates: 2014-2019

EPOTS

This study investigates the relationship between diabetes and progression of tuberculosis.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Partners: Indo-US Vaccine Action Program/NIAID

Funder: Centers for Disease Control

Dates: 2015-2017

Analysis of MassHealth Patients with High Needs

This project investigates personal and community factors predictive of MassHealth subscribers with high health care expenditure and special needs.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Partners: Clark University, UMass Family Medicine and Community Health

Funder: MassHealth (Massachusetts Medicaid)

Dates: 2014-2016

Project A – MassHealth SIMS Data Integration

Project H – Analyze Profiles by Selected Outcomes

This project develops predictive models for functional disabilities, falls and fall injuries, long term care needs among Massachusetts Medicaid and Medicare populations.

UMass Worcester PRC Principal Investigator: Wenjun Li, PhD

Partners: MA Elderly Affairs, LTSS Policy Lab Projects

Funder: MassHealth (Massachusetts Medicaid)

Dates: 2014-2016



Snowshoeing at Green Hill Park, Worcester



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For More Information

Please contact us at:
umwprc@umassmed.edu
www.umassmed.edu/prc
508-856-4685
[@umwprc](https://twitter.com/umwprc)

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