



CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR DIETETIC RESEARCH

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Pushing the boundaries of nutrition knowledge

Charlottetown, PEI – June 4, 2009: Seven new research projects – each with the potential to enhance the health of Canadians – will begin this month, thanks to funding from the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research (CFDR).

The seven successful grant applicants were announced during the Dietitians of Canada national conference in Charlottetown on June 4, 2009.

“With so many conflicting stories about which foods to eat and how to improve health through diet, the only way to find definitive answers is through research,” says Mary Sue Waisman, President of CFDR. “Our Foundation funds nutrition research projects that provide evidence-based answers to nutrition questions. The grants we’re funding this year will provide evidence on questions related to thiamin deficiencies in people with heart failure, the need for vitamin D in infants, dietary interventions in infertile women with polycystic ovary syndrome, and more. All seven projects will push the boundaries of nutrition knowledge and lead to a healthier Canada.”

The seven grants look at the following questions:

How can all Canadian infants get the Vitamin D needed for optimal health? Sina Gallo, PDt, RD, MSc and her team at McGill University recognize that vitamin D supplementation is required for breastfed infants to prevent rickets. Vitamin D deficiency rickets is seen more frequently among infants of vegetarian mothers yet most common vitamin D preparations for infants contain the animal derived vitamin D3 form. This research will explore whether equal daily intakes of plant derived vitamin D2 and animal derived D3 are equivalent in establishing optimal vitamin D levels in breast fed newborns. Results of this study will enable dietitians to provide the best advice to parents to ensure their infant is at least risk for rickets while still adhering to their own belief systems.

What are beginning dietitians’ experiences in the first years of practice? Jacqui Gingras, PhD, RD from Ryerson University and her co PI’s (Debbie MacLellan, PhD, RD, UPEI, and Daphne Lordly, RD, Mt. St. Vincent’s) will explore new dietitians’ life experiences and the meaning they ascribe to them in the context of dietetic practice. Understanding the process of becoming a dietitian can inform practice standards, recruitment and curriculum development, and provide insights into ways to improve career resilience and retention – an increasingly important area as health professionals respond to changing human resource needs.

Can thiamin supplementation help patients with heart failure? Thiamin deficiency may contribute to the depletion of energy stores during heart failure. Mary Keith, PhD, RD, and her team from St. Michael’s Hospital will look at the prevalence of thiamin deficiency in ambulatory patients with heart failure, and will determine an effective dose of thiamin supplementation that will restore red blood cell thiamin levels, leading to better health for patients with heart failure.

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What is the history of dietetics education in British Columbia? Laura Cullen, RD, MBA, Catherine Morley, PhD, RD, FDC and their team will document the history of dietetics education in British Columbia to inform dietetics education planning in the province and to serve as a pilot to developing similar histories in other parts of the country. The absence of such a history prevents learning about efforts that met with success or were not effective. Findings from the study will be used in at least two publications: a history of dietetics education in BC, and recommended approaches for dietitian researchers interested in historical research.

Do a mother's metabolic abnormalities in pregnancy affect breast milk and subsequent infant metabolic development? Human breast milk contains not only nutrients, but also hormones involved in metabolic regulation. Evidence indicates that offspring of women with gestational diabetes have an increased risk for obesity and type 2 diabetes. Sylvia Ley, RD, MSc, PhD (Cand) at the University of Toronto and others will look at the impact of metabolic abnormalities on milk hormones and subsequently on infant development. This research may assist health professionals to develop effective diabetes prevention strategies.

Can diet result in weight loss and impact infertility in obese women with polycystic ovary syndrome? Megan MacInnis, RD, Royal Alexandra Hospital and her colleagues note that over half of women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a common hormonal disorder in women of reproductive age, are overweight or obese. They hypothesize that nutrition counseling focused on a high fibre, low GI diet will result in significant weight loss and affect fertility outcomes in these women. Results from this study will provide information regarding the efficacy of dietary intervention in infertile women with PCOS.

Do cultural beliefs and attitudes towards foods have an impact on acceptance of dietary recommendations for the management of Type 2 Diabetes? Research shows that Aboriginal people with type 2 diabetes have less favourable glycemic control than the general population. Food choices contribute to this phenomenon. Zsolt Toth, RD, from the Noojmowin Teg Aboriginal Health Centre in Little Current, Ontario, will look at culturally shared local beliefs towards foods that may impact glycemic control. An understanding of cultural beliefs and attitudes towards foods will allow for a better patient-provider interaction and can promote healthier dietary intakes amongst aboriginal community members with diabetes.

The Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research was created in 1991 by Dietitians of Canada to support applied nutrition and dietetic research. Thanks to the generous support of corporate donors and individual members of Dietitians of Canada, CFDR has awarded research grants annually since 1993. To date, CFDR has funded 93 research teams across the country, awarding more than \$1,090,000 in grants.

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