Dear Colleagues,

With the summer nearing its end, I am excited about expanding the HNRCA’s collaborations across the University. We continue to work closely with the Friedman School, teaching many courses and advising, supporting the doctoral research work of several students and forging research and training collaborations with faculty. We are also working with the Cummings School, the Friedman School and the Medical School to prepare our first joint NIH grant application that bridges the study of human health and agricultural challenges. We envision that this will be the first of many fruitful opportunities for collaboration moving forward.

This year’s HNRCA seminar series is organized around the theme of Aging Research at Tufts University. This series will showcase the exciting aging research being conducted across all of the university’s schools and institutions, and will provide all of us with a unique opportunity to discover new opportunities for collaboration across Tufts. We are also pleased to announce that the Director of the National Institute on Aging, Richard Hodes, will be delivering the keynote speech for this initiative on Friday, October 5.

This year, five of the Tufts Collaborates, Tufts Innovates and CTSI pilot grants had PIs or Co-Is from the HNRCA. HNRCA scientists also serve on multiple University-wide committees. For example, Sarah Booth serves on the Graduate Education Committee; Nirupa Matthan is a member of the President’s Diversity Council; Alice Lichtenstein chairs the CTSI Scientific Advisory Committee; Xiang-Dong Wang and Joel Mason direct the Nutrition Core of the Tufts Cancer Center, just to name a few.

Our research clusters also are offering new and exciting collaborative opportunities for scientists at the HNRCA. We are planning a cluster retreat in the fall, where I look forward to hearing the progress and discussing the next steps for the clusters in 2013.

Last, but certainly not least, we are so grateful to Dick Doolin and Deena Strabone for their support of the HNRCA this summer during a time of administrative transition. Their excellent contributions have helped us ensure that all the gears continued to turn with ease. Many thanks to Dick and Deena, and to the University, for lending that support.

I look forward to a productive fall at the HNRCA.

Sincerely,

Simin Nikbin Meydani, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Physician Training Conference to be Held at HNRCA in October

Drs. Joel Mason and Ed Saltzman are hosting a conference for trainees and practicing physicians at the HNRCA on October 11-12, 2012. “Nutrition and Exercise in the Management of Outpatients: Important Advances You Need to Know” will provide a forum for nationally- and internationally-recognized experts to communicate theoretical and practical information that is most critical for state-of-the-art excellence in clinical care.

Lectures pertaining to commonly encountered conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, HIV positivity, and liver disease will be presented. Additional discussions will explore the latest insights regarding the benefits and risks associated with questions commonly posed by patients to their primary care physician, such as the worthiness of vitamin supplementation and the use of probiotics.

Conference partners include the American Society for Nutrition and the Boston Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center. Financial Support is being provided by Abbott Nutrition Health Institute.

Vegetables are at their peak enjoyment right now

Scientist Spotlight:

Dr. Susan Roberts and the iDiet Program

Dr. Susan Roberts, Director of the Energy Metabolism Laboratory at the HNRCA, has developed a new group dieting program, the results of which have been shown to exceed those of the biggest names in the dieting industry. Her iDiet program, which is based on her 2011 book, The “I” Diet, is currently being scaled by a corporate backer, Instinct Health Science, Inc. (IHS) to national levels, with an emphasis on workplace groups.

“I’m a full time employee here at the HNRCA. I can do so much research in my labs but it’s not going to help America unless it gets out there,” says Roberts. Herself a successful dieter – she was once about 50 pounds heavier than she is today – she notes that studies of national programs like Weight Watchers report an average weight loss of only 6.5 pounds. “They have a small percentage of participants who do really well, but the majority does poorly. In one research study, people who stayed in the program for six months lost an average of just 10 pounds.”

Dr. Roberts’ research began by compiling “every study ever done on obesity.” She read nearly 3,000 studies for the book and synthesized them down. But still, her book was
initially four times its published length. “It was a major process turning this from wonky science into simple stuff. It was a review on a very large scale,” she says.

“My publisher said, ‘Sue, you’ve got to put some people through the program.’ I had put together all the best weight loss recommendations but we needed to test it,” she recounts. So, she put an ad in her local newspaper for a free weight loss program in Weston, MA. Participants met in the room above her garage every Saturday for eight weeks. “The group format is excellent,” she says, “but eight weeks wasn’t long enough, so I converted the program into a 16 week and then a 32 week program.”

Dr. Roberts has pilot tested the weight loss groups in four Boston area workplaces. She says that of the original participants in the program sites, 89% stayed with the program for 6 months and almost all lost weight – and average weight loss was greater than any previous published worksite program.

As a community service project for Tufts, Dr. Roberts offered the program to the HNRCA. A trainer from IHS has been meeting with participants weekly since April. The average loss in the group is 14.3 pounds in eleven weeks, and the group continues to meet. “They’ve done so very well and they are so enthusiastic about achieving their goals,” she says.

Dr. Roberts continues to run community groups even as she continues her research for next-generation help. “I usually run one group a week myself for the grounding it gives me in real-life problems. It’s helpful to see what they struggle with and what they need. I really like helping these people. There isn’t any dieter I can’t relate to.”

New National Appointments for Center Scientists

Dr. Bess Dawson-Hughes was recently selected to join the first Board of Directors of the new Center for Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS).

Dr. Roger Fielding will become a new Associate Editor for Journals of Gerontology Medical Sciences, effective January 1, 2013.

New Administrative Director, Mark Wesley

Mark Wesley joined the HNRCA in July as Senior Director for Administration
Mark holds a Bachelor of Science from Northeastern University.

At the HNRCA, Mark sees tremendous opportunity to apply his background to the Center's essential work in improving the quality of life for aging populations, research that he sees as having truly universal application. As he gets established at the HNRCA, Mark’s top priorities in the coming months are to ensure that administrative, computing and grant management services are fully responsive to the needs of the Center's scientific staff; to enhance and maintain excellent working relationships with our USDA/ARS and University stakeholders; and to help identify and manage financial resources to support the Center’s vital research into healthy aging through nutrition and physical activity.

Mark looks forward to meeting and working with the Center’s scientific and support staff, and extends an open invitation everyone at the HNRCA to stop by and say hello.

Fall Seminar Series to Highlight Healthy Aging Work at Tufts University.

The upcoming fall session of the HNRCA seminar series, “Collaborations on Healthy Aging at Tufts (CHAT),” was initiated after compiling a list of almost one hundred Tufts faculty, staff and scientists whose research has an age-related component.

The HNRCA will host 12 speakers, each from a different discipline, school and/or campus at the University for a one-hour seminar followed by an afternoon of exploration on future collaboration.

The first seminar will be “Nutritional modulation of cardiac disease in dogs and cats,” given by Lisa M. Freeman, DVM, PhD, Professor at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. The seminar will be held in the HNRCA mezzanine auditorium on September 10 at 12 noon.

In addition to the Tufts speakers, Dr. Richard Hodes, Director of the National Institute on Aging, will give a keynote address on Friday, October 5th at the HNRCA.

A complete listing of speakers and seminar topics is available at: http://hnrca.tufts.edu/events/seminars/

HNRCA in the News

HNRCA scientific expertise and original research continues to be prominently featured in the popular press in the U.S. and abroad. Well over 100 original stories have covered our work in 2012. Some recent HNRCA-related headlines include:

- El Mundo (Spain). Dr. Jose Ordovas, ‘No creo en la medicina personalizada tal y como se practica hoy’ (‘I do not believe in personalized medicine as practiced today’). July 20, 2012.
- Los Angeles Times, Dr. Alice Lichtenstein, New York trans fat ban has cut consumption, study finds. July 16, 2012
- WNYC-FM (New York City Public Radio). Dr. Jeffrey Blumberg, Debating the Pros and Cons of Vitamin Supplements. June 11, 2012

News from the HNRCA Employee Recreation Association

Over the summer the ERA has been compiling your favorite recipes for an HNRCA cookbook. They want to thank everyone who submitted recipes and anticipate the book being ready this fall.

Anyone interested in an HNRCA book club, please let the ERA know by emailing them at hrnca_employeerecreationassociation@tufts.edu. If there is enough interest the ERA will help get the club started.

The group encourages everyone to get involved! If you are interested in learning more about the ERA, attend a meeting. The group meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month at 2:00pm. Look for notices regarding the next meeting. They are always looking for new members!

Welcome New Hires

We welcome the following new members of the HNRCA family.

Cheng Ngo, Chi - Budget & Admin Coord
Kristo, Aleksandra - Postdoctoral Associate
Pham, Lucia - Research Asst
Power, Stephanie - Postdoctoral Associate
Rice, Nicholas - Sr Research Technician
Sagliani, Kristen - Research Asst
Sloan, Sarah - Biostatistician
Smith, Tanisha R. - Processing Coordinator
Wesley, Mark R. - Administrative Director
Yopchick, Jennelle E. - Postdoctoral Associate

Recent Publications from HNRCA Scientists

The recent publications listed below reflect submissions to the Director’s office through May 31, 2012. We will continue to collect new publications from all labs and include them in future newsletters. Thank you!


Yu J, et. al (including HNRCA Scientists Johnson EJ and Shang F). Measurement of macular pigment...


Maki KC. et al. (including HNRCA Scientists, Chen CYO, McKay DL, Blumberg JB). Digestive and physiologic effects of a wheat bran extract,


Schaefer, EJ, et al. (including HNRCA Scientists Margaret Diffenderfer and Gregory G. Dolnikowski). Effects of CETP inhibition on triglyceride-rich


