

UPDATE

LIFE Study Targets Elderly Population

A new research project called the LIFE Study (Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders) is in full swing at The Cooper Institute, and men and women ages 70 to 85 years are eligible to participate if they meet the study criteria.

Funded by the National Institute on Aging, the LIFE Study will look at 400 elderly individuals who are at risk of serious mobility disability because they already have some indicators of frailty.

Other participating study centers include Wake Forest University Medical School, University of Pittsburgh and Stanford University Medical Schools. Investigators from Yale University, Boston University, Tufts University and San Diego State University complete the study team.

Research participants will be randomly assigned to one of two groups—a health education group that provides information on many topics (i.e., nutrition, communicating with healthcare professionals, foot care, etc.) and an exercise program consisting of aerobic exercise, resistance exercise and balance training.

According to recruitment director Jason Wallace, the Institute is looking for more minority candidates. Recruitment will continue through December.

The main purpose of the LIFE Study is to examine the effects of the above two programs on physical performance, functional abilities and other measures of health status. "Our ultimate goal is to develop future programs to enhance independence and health in older adults," Wallace said.

Participants must be available for regular physical activity sessions or successful aging/health education classes at The Cooper Institute's North Dallas or Oak Cliff facilities. To find out about participation, call (972) 716-7032.

The Cooper Institute Advances Online Learning System

The Cooper Institute's Division of Education and Certification is developing an online learning tool that will open doors for students who find that an online learning envi-

ronment best meets their educational needs. The new technology also has the potential of being used in many other areas of the organization.

Michael J. Sacco, a doctoral candidate and Cooper Institute Fellowship recipient, is spearheading the Institute's new learning management system. Based

on a six-month study focused on future education and instructional technology needs, the new online learning system is expected to generate interest from a broad audience, including personal trainers, exercise professionals, military personnel, large corporations and universities.

Currently, the Institute is conducting a pilot study to gauge the interest of its student population. "The pilot study allows us to determine its effect on our current student population without investing large sums of money in the development stages and utilizing resources that could otherwise be used more effectively," Sacco said. The first course to be offered in a hybrid online/offline format is the Division's popular Physical Fitness Specialist (PFS) class.

Students typically attend five days of PFS classes at the Institute and digest as much of the course material as possible in preparation for the certification exam at the end of the week. With the new online system, students

are able to work on course material at their own pace. After they have completed this material, they schedule a two-day visit at The Cooper Institute to learn information from

Cooper's professional instructors that cannot adequately be taught online and to complete certification testing.

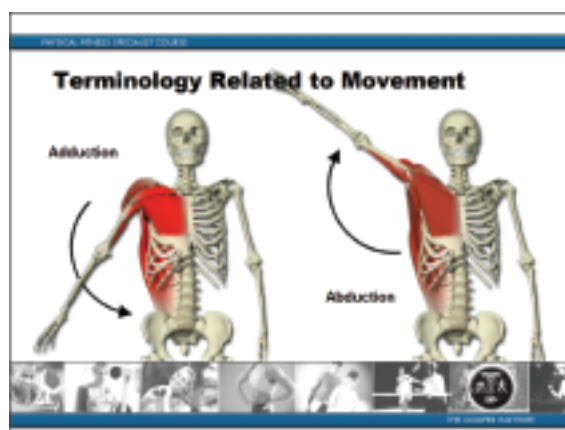
The Division of Education and Certification plans to expand its online educational efforts to current and future physical activity, nutrition and health promotion courses.

"One of the Institute's goals is to

explore new ways in which we can better utilize our top-notch instructors and current physical activity and nutrition research findings," said Sacco. "This new online system enables us to incorporate our findings into emerging multimedia technologies and, ultimately, to better disseminate our message to a large audience."

Once the online learning management system is fine-tuned, it will likely be used to benefit other areas of the organization. For instance, Sacco said there's a possibility of creating an interactive support group for participants in the Institute's weight management studies and establishing an internal communication system incorporating video, presentation software and instant messaging applications for all areas of The Cooper Institute.

"There are numerous possibilities with this system, and our hope is to provide as many people as possible with the fundamental principles that The Cooper Institute has been teaching for years," Sacco said.



This figure from the anatomy section of the Physical Fitness Specialist course uses some of the latest software to show students the detailed kinetic movement of the human body during exercise.

Photo credit: *Interactive Functional Anatomy*, Susan K. Hillman. Published by Primal Pictures, Ltd., London. Used with permission.

The Realities of Growth



Steven N. Blair, P.E.D.

The Cooper Institute has completed another successful year. We continue to contribute to public health and preventive medicine

through a variety of projects and initiatives. In addition to expanding our research infrastructure, we have:

- obtained additional competitive research grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- expanded educational courses
- published more than 50 papers in medical and research journals
- opened the Texas On the Move affiliate of the national America On the Move program
- started a radio show based in Chicago and distributed via a national radio health network
- formalized a collaboration with the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health to enhance the research productivity and community service contributions of both organizations.

More detailed information on recent activities is available in our 2003-2004 annual report, which was presented to our Board of Trustees in early November and is now available. If you would like to receive a copy, please contact Barb McGowan at bmcgowan@cooperinst.org.

The success of our scientists and educators has led to the growth of our organization and international recogni-

tion, which is gratifying. However, some growing pains are inevitable. For example, our expanding staff means that we need additional space and facilities, and that some of our operational and management systems must be reorganized and expanded.

The largest single source of revenue for the Institute is from grants and contracts from the NIH. For the fiscal year just completed, we received NIH grants totaling \$6.78 million, which represents 53% of our total budget. The NIH review process is highly competitive, and I am very proud of the success of our investigators. Obtaining NIH funding for research projects is one of the most crucial aspects of meeting our mission. The problem is that NIH pays for the direct costs of research and for part of the operational expenses to support research—but it doesn't take growth into account.

In addition, the operational costs reimbursed by NIH only covers partial amounts of the actual operational costs, which means that for every \$1,000 awarded by NIH to support research projects, we incur a deficit of approximately \$200 in non-reimbursed operational costs. *This creates a paradox in that the more success our scientists have in the competitive grant process, the greater the deficit we have in operational expenses.* This deficit must be covered by other sources, typically from our development efforts.

In addition to the need for funds to cover operational expense deficits to supplement NIH grants, we are also in need of support for growth and expansion of Institute programs. One of the most critical needs to ensure the long-term viability of The Cooper Institute is to expand the critical mass of top-level scientific investigators. As indicated above, our current staff continues to be highly productive and is successful in obtaining NIH funding; however, we only have about a half a dozen independent investigators with the creative ability and expertise to regularly obtain NIH grants to support their work.

Departure of one or two of these individuals from the Institute, or a temporary decline in NIH funding, will substantially jeopardize our financial stability. To prevent this from happening, we need to expand our scientific staff to 15 to 20 independent investigators who are capable of obtaining NIH funding. One of my major goals for the next five years is to increase the number of investigators on our staff to this level. This will provide the critical mass to ensure long-term success of the Institute.

The recent and planned growth of our research program causes problems with space, staff support and operational infrastructure to support research activities. Again, NIH will not pay for expanding facilities and the research infrastructure; so we have to turn to development activities to provide these resources.

We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated Board of Trustees and a growing circle of Institute friends both here in Dallas and across the country who have consistently helped us grow and prosper. This trend is continuing, and I am excited about some development initiatives presented at our Board of Trustees' annual meeting. We have had some major gifts and matching challenges within the Board of Trustees. I will expand on this topic in our next issue and tell you a little bit about our newest board member who was installed at the meeting: David Glass, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., and owner of the Kansas City Royals.

Staff members at The Cooper Institute work diligently to receive federal funding and grants for groundbreaking research and education; but without the generosity of individuals who believe in our mission and our ability to carry it out, we would not be able to reach new heights. We hope those of you who have recently been exposed to our work will join us as we go to the next level. Contact Barb McGowan at (800) 635-7050 to discuss how your financial involvement can make a difference.

Study Looks at Obesity in Adolescent Girls

Obesity is a complex health issue that impacts many adolescent females—not only physically, but psychologically as well. The Cooper Institute recently collaborated with Southern Methodist University (SMU) and the Family Studies Center to test the effectiveness of a family-based weight management program for 12- to 15-year-old girls.

The research project, called “Parents & Adolescents Toward a Healthy Start (PATHS),” was funded by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. Participants included 45 adolescent females who, along with their parents, took part in one of three groups.

The **psychoeducational group** participated in a 12-week behaviorally based curriculum developed by Cooper Institute researchers. Curriculum topics included behavioral strategies, physical activity, healthy eating and psychosocial issues. Participants in this group also played interactive games such as “Nutrition Jeopardy,” which reinforced the importance of making healthy lifestyle changes.

The **family process group** received the same curriculum as the psychoeducational group, with the addition of a discussion group to problem-solve and set goals. The discussion group replaced the interactive games held in the psychoeducational group.

The **wait-list control group** served as the study’s control group. This group received the 12-week intervention at the end of the study.

Diet was assessed in adolescents with a 24-hour diet recall, and parents completed a food frequency questionnaire. The Previous Day Physical Activity Recall was used to measure physical activity in adolescents, which required children to recall three days of physical activity from the previous week, two weekdays and one weekend day. Parents’ activity was measured with the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ). Body image, depressive symptoms, disordered eating and family functioning were measured at each assessment period in both parents and adolescents.

Initial results of this pilot study revealed that there were no significant differences between body mass index (BMI) changes or weight loss between the two treatment groups. Both showed a reduction in BMI, while the control group showed a slight increase. The psychoeducational group members were more successful in reducing their caloric intake.

Cooper Institute researchers are particularly interested in the family component of PATHS. Research associate Heather Kitzman, M.A., and her team are examining the relationship between family variables and the girls’ overall success in the program.

“The family is significant because parents regulate the child’s access to physical activity and food in the home,” Kitzman said. “They also serve as role models. It’s important to intervene at the parent level in some way.”

Certification Courses Draw Native Americans

Native Americans from 11 states and 19 tribes have embraced The Cooper Institute’s certification courses and are spreading the news that small lifestyle changes can have a significant impact on their health.

More than 100 Native Americans have attended the Institute’s courses in Dallas, and more than 15 on-site certification courses have been delivered at various reservations across the States.

Last year, the Health Promotion Director (HPD) and Coaching Healthy Behaviors (CHB) courses were taught at the University of North Dakota’s National Resource Center on Native American Aging. The Cooper Institute’s instructors showed them how to develop, implement and evaluate their programs so they could increase their program impact.

“Native Americans value and revere their older population, and want to preserve their culture,” said Carol Mooney, associate director in the Division of Education & Certification. “Adapting the new information to the Native American culture at each reservation is the key to reaching and meeting the elders’ wellness needs.”

Johnny Henderson, a participant from a Navajo reservation in New Mexico, was so inspired by the Institute’s Physical Fitness Specialist course in Dallas that he sought funds from his tribal leaders to set up an on-site wellness program after he completed the course.

Confident that he could decrease participants’ health risks through increased physical activity, Henderson set up a pilot fitness program for 12 people and tracked the changes in their health risk factors and fitness levels after 12 weeks of participation.

Because the pilot program was such a success, the community leaders aggressively secured funds to build a wellness center on the reservation. Henderson was asked to become the fitness director and to oversee the development, programming and ongoing Wellness Center operations.

In addition to various tribes across the United States, The Cooper Institute works with Indian Health Services in North Dakota and South Dakota, and welcomes other specific groups that want to promote a healthy lifestyle.



In Brief...

The Cooper Institute is making plans for an information-packed 2005 lecture series.

Speakers in the lineup include Claude Bouchard, Ph.D., a world authority on obesity; Elizabeth Barrett Connor, M.D., Ph.D., a leading expert on women’s health; and Jim Hill, Ph.D., founder of America On the Move. The Institute’s 35th anniversary will be celebrated at the May event. The lecture series is open to the public on a subscription/reservation basis. For more information, contact Barb McGowan at (800) 635-7050.

The Cooper Institute hosted “Increasing Physical Activity in Populations” in Dallas, October 21-23.

The conference helped set the agenda for research on diffusion and dissemination of physical activity programs and recommendations.

The Tyler Cup Invitational, organized by Cooper Institute staff, celebrated its 30th anniversary on Oct. 22-23.

The invitation-only race draws more than 100 corporate executives each year and is designed to promote fitness among leaders.

In the Spotlight: Margo Simmons

Margo Simmons works behind the scenes at The Cooper Institute—handling information and events that are



visible by many. She wears several hats, from supervising the data entry team to overseeing facilities management. With

Simmons and her dedicated staff making sure that these areas run smoothly, other areas of the Institute are well-served and operate seamlessly. In this Q&A, Simmons discusses her roles and how they connect with other divisions at the Institute.

Q: How long have you worked at The Cooper Institute, and how did you hear about the job opportunity?

A: I began working at the Institute on April 24, 2000. I had left a job that I loved as an intake coordinator for a pregnancy and adoption center and, unfortunately, wasn't happy in my new role as a deputy district clerk for one of the local courts. I noticed an ad in the *Dallas Morning News* for a data entry supervisor position at The Cooper Institute. I sent in my resume and got called in for an interview. A week or so later, I was offered the position.

Q: Describe your position as data entry supervisor.

A: I coordinate the work schedules of the data entry staff, help provide training and make sure the data for the Institute's research studies is correctly keyed into the computer. We currently have nine talented data entry staff who are critical to the net results of our research studies.

Q: What are your other roles at the Institute?

A: I am one of three people who organizes the Tyler Cup Invitational, which is

held every October. My job is to basically do everything an event coordinator does: make sure the rooms are booked, plan menus, handle multitudes of correspondence, obtain photos of prize winners and a variety of other tasks. I also plan an annual meeting for the scientists who make decisions about our *FITNESSGram* (youth fitness assessment) software.

In January 2004 I also became the facilities manager at The Cooper Institute. This job involves taking care of the building and making sure everything is up to code. I have two staff members: a building superintendent and a building technician. We coordinate office moves and provide painting needs, work with vendors, and assist in office planning and suite furnishings, among many other things. In terms of improvements, we just completed moving our data entry staff into more efficient workstations, rather than leave them in private offices where two or three employees shared space. Thanks to the generosity of a local foundation, we bought systems furniture to complement what we already had and also opened up three private offices for greater efficiencies.

Q: What is your educational background?

A: I received a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree from Dallas Baptist University with a double major: psychology and business administration.

Q: You've seen a lot of health-related data used by Cooper Institute researchers. How has this information impacted you?

A: Seeing the data gave me a greater understanding of why some of my relatives died young. I'm from Mississippi, and I've learned that my home state has one of the worst obesity rates. It's interesting to look at the food choices my family and friends make in Mississippi and compare them with the choices made by others. Looking back, fried "anything" was a meal staple. We didn't consider it dinner unless we had something fried on the plate, be it chicken,

pork or fish. In my home, it was unthinkable to prepare these dishes any other way.

I've had the opportunity to eat with many of the researchers in a group setting. When they have had the opportunity to choose, I've seen some of the choices they have made. They eat healthy. It's fresh vegetables, lean meat and fresh fruit. Being around them and their data has inspired me to do better in my own cooking.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I enjoy drawing, sewing and investigating issues. Dallas County has a lot of public records, and I enjoy playing Nancy Drew! I'm an inquisitive person.

Q: What personal milestones would you like to share?

A: In January 2005, my husband, Eddie, and I will celebrate our 20th anniversary. Also, our daughter, Karmen, will graduate from Yvonne Ewell Townview Magnet High School next spring. We are proud of her accomplishments, and we look forward to supporting her in her collegiate pursuits.

Q: What are your future goals?

A: I recently decided to pursue my master's degree, beginning in January. My days are full, but I'm going to make a way. I'm considering organizational management. The Cooper Institute values education and encourages employees who are interested in going back to school. The environment here is very motivational.

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