

# UPDATE

## DREW Research Study Reflects Diversity

Researchers at The Cooper Institute are eagerly awaiting results from DREW, "Dose Respond to Exercise in Women." The five-year study, which comes to a close in November, involves 464 postmenopausal, overweight women ages 45 to 75. An unprecedented 35% of these participants represent minority groups, which will help researchers obtain broader knowledge on a diverse group of women.

"Dr. Tim Church and his group have successfully managed a study that could be accomplished in very few of the world's research centers," said Steven Blair, P.E.D., president of The Cooper Institute. "You will be hearing a lot about DREW results over the next few years."

In order to obtain eligible participants, recruitment coordinator Jason Wallace and his team had to phone-interview more than 4,500 women. "The study opened my eyes to how hard you have to work to get enough eligible people into a study," Wallace said.

In minority communities, word-of-mouth significantly helped create interest. Other recruiting methods included going to health fairs, taking part in radio shows—even visiting beauty salons and churches. A \$500 incentive was offered upon successful completion of the study.

The Cooper Institute opened a satellite office in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas in 2002, which helped researchers meet

*(continued on page 3)*

## Weight-Loss Program Expands to Executives

The Cooper Institute recently launched the Executive Weight Management Program for men and women seeking a flexible program schedule or anonymity. The program was developed in response to consumer interest.

Participants in the Executive program buy blocks of four sessions and are encouraged to maintain weekly facilitator contact for at least three months.

The Executive program is built on the model established for the Institute's six-month CORE program, which teaches the basic lifestyle skills shown to help people make healthy food and physical activity choices.

The typical participant in the Institute's program has an average BMI of 34, which puts them in the obese range. "It's not someone who comes in and wants to lose 10 pounds," said Jay Ashmore, Ph.D., who heads up The Cooper Institute's Weight Management Program. "Our participants have tried multiple diets, and some are considering gastric bypass surgery."

Trained professionals including a psychologist, physician, exercise physiologist, dietitian, health educator and nurse work with each client. "We give people the skills they need to make wise choices that will work with their lifestyle," Ashmore said.

As an example, one participant who lost about 100 pounds in the CORE program stated up-front that she ate fast food regularly, and it was part of how she lived.

To help her lose weight, Ashmore and his team taught her the skill of portion control. She began ordering children's meals when eating out and lost weight as a result.

The Weight Management Program has adopted an "All Foods Fit" philosophy, in which there are no "bad" foods. A similar philosophy applies to physical activity. The goal? "Move your body more," Ashmore stated. "Your body doesn't know the difference

between walking around a mall at a moderate intensity or walking on a treadmill at that same level," he said. "You can choose whatever works for you." His

team encourages clients to at least meet the public health recommendations of accumulating 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, most days of the week.

One of the key benefits of CORE is getting group support from other participants. "Social support is a key to weight management because it holds people accountable," Ashmore said.

Another key is self-monitoring. Participants in the Weight Management Program are asked to log

what they eat and do for physical activity each day.

Once participants have reached their personalized goals, Ashmore recommends that they move into the six-month Continuation Program.

Since the Weight Management Program was launched in 2000, more than 300 participants have enrolled. To date, there are 70 active participants. The average participant is 48 years old and weighed 262 pounds upon entering the program. Most individuals lose an average of two pounds per week.

Ashmore said he has come to "understand and appreciate" how hard it is for some people to lose weight and keep it off. "Seeing and hearing people describe that this is something they struggle with every single day—it's always on their mind—makes our team more compassionate toward the challenges they face," he said. "We want to help them reach their goals and learn to make positive choices."

The Weight Management Program offers open enrollment. To find out more, call (972) 716-7019 or send an email to [loseweight@cooperinst.org](mailto:loseweight@cooperinst.org).



# Letter From the President & CEO

By Steven N. Blair, P.E.D.

## Judging the Quality of Scientific Research



Steven N. Blair, P.E.D.

As is the case for professionals in all fields, scientists are concerned about the quality of their work. And, as is also customary,

quality is difficult to judge.

A quality research program must pass the critical review of scientific peers in order to even merit publication—and then the published writing must influence the direction of a field.

One measure of productivity in research is the publication of articles in the scientific literature, but simply counting the number of published articles is an insufficient index of quality. As mentioned, a more important indicator of quality is whether or not the research influences the field. How can this be judged?

One common approach is to determine the rate at which other scientists use findings of specific research studies.

The Institute for Scientific Information publishes the *Science Citation Index*, which provides data on the number of times individual research articles are cited by other scientists. It may surprise you to know that a high percentage of scientific articles are never cited in the scientific literature. When this occurs, one wonders if other scientists are even reading the article! Of articles that are cited in other reports, the average number of citations is approximately 10;

and any article that is cited 50 times can be considered a “classic.”

A recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* discussed highly cited articles published in major medical journals from 1990 to 2001. The standard for selection was that the articles were cited 1,000 times or more, an extremely high standard. To show the rarity of this citation rate, only 49 articles in the world’s literature during this period met this criteria.

Our first publication from the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study (ACLS) on fitness and mortality was published in November 1989, so it missed qualifying for the article by two months; but our report would have qualified. Through August 5, 2005, this ACLS publication had been cited 1,148 times in other articles. The 1989 report is the ACLS citation leader, but we also have had one article cited more than 400 times, three cited more than 200 times, and nine cited more than 100 times.

Our articles have been used in all recent major recommendations for physical activity, including reports from the American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and other organizations in the U.S. and abroad.

The Cooper Institute, while small in comparison to other research organizations, has a remarkable reputation for its publishing and citation history. I am very proud of the accomplishments of our scientists and educators.

All of our friends and supporters should share in this pride because each of you has helped us achieve a high standard of excellence in our work.

Thank you, and I pledge that we will strive to continue our record of conducting important, innovative and influential studies—and produce quality results that provide meaningful data for articles and the major medical journals.

## Cooper Institute Welcomes New COO



Terry Rives, Dr.P.H., joined The Cooper Institute in September as vice president/ chief operating officer. He

reports to Steven Blair, P.E.D., president and CEO.

“I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to be part of the Institute’s rich history,” Rives said, noting that Blair’s legacy as a scientific researcher was instrumental in his decision to come to the Institute.

Rives previously directed the operations and strategic planning of Outcomes Assessment and Biostatistical Services at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston.

“He brings expertise in epidemiology, operational issues, human resources and public health,” Blair said. “He is a great addition to our staff.”

In his new post, Rives will oversee the Institute’s daily internal operations and help facilitate strategic planning. He also will provide support to the Institute’s team of researchers and educators.

Rives cited Dr. Kenneth Cooper’s vision and ability to implement it, as well as the personal dedication of each staff member to carry out that vision, as foundational strengths of the Institute.

Rives previously served as a biostatistician and epidemiologist at Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children’s Hospital and research scientist at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. He earned his doctor of public health degree from the University of Texas-Houston Health Science Center.

## New Software Helps Youth Track Fitness and Activity

Students in grade K-12 are now able to track their physical activity and participate in innovative activity challenges, thanks to the new *FITNESSGRAM/ACTIVITYGRAM* 8.0 software that contains both fitness- and activity-related assessments and tracking tools.

Developed by The Cooper Institute in 1982, *FITNESSGRAM* is an assessment tool used in more than 18,500 schools/school districts. It emphasizes health-related fitness based on what is optimal for good health and measures three components that are important to overall health and function:

- aerobic capacity
- body composition
- muscular strength, endurance and flexibility



***FITNESSGRAM* measures three components of health-related fitness in youth, including flexibility.**

It helps teachers focus on regular physical activity, the key factor in developing and maintaining physical fitness," said Marilu Meredith, Ed.D., director of Education Operations at The Cooper Institute and *FITNESSGRAM* national project director.

With its centralized database, the newest release of *FITNESSGRAM/ACTIVITYGRAM* 8.0 makes it easier for schools to keep track of students as they move through the school system. In addition, it includes many functions designed specifically for students to help keep track of their personal fitness and activity program.

"The new software is state-of-the-art," Meredith said. "With many new features, we believe it will significantly help educators and parents promote physical activity."

Distributed by Human Kinetics Publishers, the 8.0 module offers many new reports, including a new parent *FITNESSGRAM* report. To take a virtual tour or obtain more information, visit [www.FITNESSGRAM.net](http://www.FITNESSGRAM.net).

The *ACTIVITYGRAM* module is the only computerized physical activity assessment available for use with schoolchildren. It provides a three-day record of activities performed during each 30-minute period between 7 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. Each entry includes the time of day, the number of minutes in the activity, the intensity level of the activity and the type of activity from the Activity Pyramid.

Used in conjunction with the individualized *FITNESSGRAM* report, *ACTIVITYGRAM* shows students and their parents how much of which physical activities will help them reach their physical activity goals. "It also

helps teachers focus on regular physical activity, the key factor in developing and maintaining physical fitness," said Marilu Meredith, Ed.D., director of Education Operations at The Cooper Institute and *FITNESSGRAM* national project director.

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their goal of 35% minority participation.

Wallace, who lives in Oak Cliff, has become involved in a lot of community activities and organizations, which he believes enabled him to gain credibility with potential study participants.

Overall, DREW consisted of the following ethnicities:

- 294 Caucasians
- 136 African Americans
- 28 Hispanics
- 6 other races

In addition to minority involvement, the study boasted an adherence rate of greater than 98%. "This adherence to a structured exercise regimen far exceeds any data currently published in any scientific literature," stated Tim Church, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., DREW project director.

Following one month of health education and medical screening, DREW participants were placed in one of four exercise groups for six months. The control group was the non-exercise group. (These individuals were offered the opportunity to work out for two months after completing the study.) The three other groups followed specific exercise "prescriptions":

- 20 to 30 minutes, three to four days a week;
- 40 minutes, three to four days a week; or
- 60 minutes, three to four days a week

Cooper Institute researchers are collecting and analyzing the data from these four groups to help determine the effect of different doses of exercise on improvements in fitness and reductions in resting blood pressure.

DREW participant Sylvia Stewart, who works full time at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship Church, decided to take part in the study because she needed to exercise more consistently.

"DREW made me accountable," she said. "It caused me to be more aware of what I wasn't doing to take care of my body and showed me ways to improve on a daily basis. The Cooper Institute's team was exceptionally knowledgeable, helpful, available and personable."

Once data is analyzed, The Cooper Institute Update will provide study results. Individuals who want to be considered for other Cooper Institute studies can contact Jason Wallace at (214) 330-0924 or [jwallace@cooperinst.org](mailto:jwallace@cooperinst.org) for a list of ongoing or future studies.



## In Brief...

**Congratulations to Susan Campbell, vice president of Education & Certification**, who earned her Ph.D. from Capella University School of Human Services with a specialization in management of nonprofit organizations.

**The Cooper Institute's enhanced web site** is under construction. Watch for it to go "live" in early 2006.

# In the Spotlight: Georita Frierson, Ph.D.



Georita Frierson, Ph.D.

Georita Frierson, Ph.D., joined The Cooper Institute in July. She functions in the newly created position of scientific director of Diversity

Programs and Research Initiatives, as well as scientific director of the Oak Cliff Center. Her primary purpose is to decrease the barriers of recruiting and retaining under-represented and underserved communities in research. She earned her bachelor's at Hampton University, and her master's and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology at The Ohio State University. Before coming to the Institute, she served as an instructor at Brown Medical School, where she also completed her internship and postdoctoral training in behavioral medicine.

In the following interview, she elaborates on her vision for serving diverse populations and introducing The Cooper Institute to an even broader audience.

### **Q: What motivated you to join The Cooper Institute?**

While doing research at Brown Medical School in Rhode Island, I focused on cancer survivorship and became interested in working with diverse communities. I wanted to be more broad-based and felt that The Cooper Institute was a good match for my interests. My desire is to work with the whole community versus a subset that has a chronic illness such as cancer. My passion is prevention and education.

### **Q: In your opinion, what are the strengths of the Oak Cliff Center?**

The team members in place are dedicated to bringing the mission of The Cooper Institute to diverse communities that have been underserved in research. The success rate of DREW, for example, reflects a great team commitment. Whenever you have a study that shows great success, it indicates that the

researchers involved are committed not only to a specific topic, but also to whatever community they are working with. I believe the community really does trust the research team at both of the Institute's research sites.

### **Q: How will you build on the Oak Cliff Center's recruitment practices?**

I think it might be a great idea to have an annual reception or "meet and greet" for community leaders, stakeholders, dignitaries, gatekeepers and research participants. They need to know what we are doing so they can continue to vouch for us, as well as our studies. It's important to stay in touch with the community and have activities so that the people know we provide a user-friendly environment. We want to have an even greater presence in the area.

### **Q: How can the Oak Cliff Center's professional reputation be maximized?**

One thing we can enhance is having additional researchers or universities utilize us as a satellite site to help them recruit diverse individuals. There are so many researchers and institutions who want to diversify their research population, and I think Oak Cliff can facilitate this goal. Also, as we continue to present at conferences and publish in professional publications, people will see that The Cooper Institute is a leader in this area.

### **Q: What is your strategic vision for the Oak Cliff Center?**

A: We want to be self-reliant and continue to grow. As a researcher, I've been trained to look at grants as a primary source of revenue, but when you have a center, you need to look at other ways to expand.

In addition to subcontracts from other institutions that use the Oak Cliff Center for multisite studies, I would like to establish an endowment. This would enable us to sponsor a student who could come in and do a specialized internship for a couple of months...or develop a program involving disadvantaged children who have had limited access to science. One thing I appreciate about Oak Cliff is that they have high school

students involved in their cooperative learning program. I am dedicated to mentoring and also would like to provide opportunities for doctoral students.

### **Q: Describe some of the research you focused on at Brown Medical School.**

One project involved looking at the barriers, facilitating factors and perceptions of African American women who may want to participate in health research. I concentrated on the low numbers of African Americans participating in cancer research. My interest was looking at the health disparities and underserved groups in research, starting with African American women and breast cancer.

Through my research, I've learned that each ethnic group—even different genders—has different barriers. I've been trained to work with diverse groups from a clinical and research standpoint, and look forward to building on the great work that has been done at The Cooper Institute.

### **Q: How do you keep physically active, and what are your personal hobbies?**

I was involved in all types of dance as a child. During my postdoc and instructor positions in Rhode Island, I taught liturgical dance to children at my home church. To stay active, I do cardiovascular exercise and weight training at the gym.



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