Member Provides Senate Testimony on Older Adult Guardianships

Speaking before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging on April 18, Virginia Tech professor Pamela Teaster, PhD, FGSA, urged lawmakers to support measures that provide adequate oversight of legal guardians and protect the rights of the older adults they serve.

Teaster serves as director of the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech. She joined three other experts at a hearing titled “Abuse of Power: Exploitation of Older Americans by Guardians and Others They Trust.”

“Too frequently, the fate of people under guardianship is poorly monitored in sufficient, meaningful, and diligent ways,” Teaster said in her testimony. “This inattention threatens to ‘unperson’ them, leaving them open to exploitation, abuse, and neglect. And protections already in place — but that are not well implemented — are not useful.”

The hearing was a continuation of the committee’s efforts to identify opportunities to help ensure older Americans are protected from exploitation or abuse by those in positions of power or trust.

“Despite estimates that some 1.5 million adults are under guardianship, in 2018, not one single state in the country can identify its people under guardianship — incomprehensible in the information age,” Teaster said. “That makes it impossible to have an appropriate level of accountability. Mechanisms put in place in order to establish it, to document its execution, and to facilitate its revocation are impeded by not knowing the very people it serves.”
GSA Keeps Engaged with Seats at Many Tables
By James Appleby, BSPharm, MPH • jappleby@geron.org

It’s Older Americans Month, and this year the theme is “Engage at Every Age.” It’s meant to emphasize that we are never too old (or young) to take part in activities that can enrich our physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Here at GSA headquarters, we’re practicing a variation on this theme by engaging in a number of collaborations that promote the professional well-being of our members. Specifically, GSA is playing leading roles in many upcoming events where we are advocating on members’ behalf, publicizing members’ research, or both. The GSA staff has worked hard to ensure that through these activities, our members collectively have a seat at many tables — with the goal of promoting the professional well-being of our members. Specifically, GSA is playing a number of roles in many upcoming events where we are advocating on members’ behalf, publicizing members’ research, or both. The GSA staff has worked hard to ensure that through these activities, our members collectively have a seat at many tables — with the goal of supporting research, education, and practice in the field of aging.

Here are a few examples of what’s been on our front burner lately:

* GSA Vice President of Strategic Alliances and Integrated Communications Karen Tracy participated in the opening plenary session of the National Oral Health Conference in late April. Hosted by the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, this is the premiere meeting for dental public health. Karen spoke about how an oral health America title “State of Decay, Vol. IV” she represented GSA on the advisory board that produced the report.
* On May 2, we hosted “Charting a Path to Increase Immunization Rates in the Long-Term Care Setting,” a Washington, DC, event organized through GSA’s National Adult Vaccination Program with support from Sanofi Pasteur. The meeting brought together immunization and long-term care advocates and focused on the challenges of vaccinating in the long-term care and methods to increase uptake of recommended strategies to improve rates.
* Our KAER Toolkit: A 4-step Process to Detecting Cognitive Impairment and Earlier Diagnosis of Dementia

prominently in the agenda of the May 3 California Dementia Healthcare Summit, where GSA was one of the sponsors. The agenda included presentations from a number of GSA members.
* GSA also was very involved in the planning of a May 9 educational briefing being convened by the Friends of the National Institute on Aging (FoNIA) coalition, for which Patricia D’Antonio, our vice president of professional affairs, serves as secretary. This event, titled “Translating Scientific Discovery into Better Care: Groundbreaking Research at the National Institute on Aging,” is welcoming leadership from the NIA and a co-chair of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus.
* At press time, GSA is gearing up for a May 10 event on Capitol Hill to launch “Longevity Economics: Leveraging the Advantages of an Aging Society,” a new report that we produced in partnership with Bank of America/Merrill Lynch. This important resource will take a look at the available evidence on the impact of population aging on economics. We’ll have more about this in next month’s Gerontology News.
* GSA also played an important role in the planning of the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit, taking place May 17 to 18 in Atlanta, Georgia. Our senior program manager for strategic alliances, Elizabeth Sobczyk, represented GSA on the steering committee. The invitation to be involved in this prestigious way is a wonderful recognition of GSA’s commitment to improving adult immunization rates.

This is but a sampling of advocacy activities that GSA has on its calendar; advocating on behalf of our members is something we’re committed to 24/7/365. And we won’t stop until we have a seat at every table.

James

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GSA (Gerontological Society of America)
1220 L Street NW, Suite 901
Washington, DC 20005
www.geron.org

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In Memoriam

Dennis L. Kodner, PhD, FGSA, passed away on February 9, 2018. He was formerly director of the New York Institute of Technology’s Center for Gerontology and Geriatrics and a professor of medicine and gerontology at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He was also an adjunct professor of medicine in the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the McGill University Faculty of Medicine. Kodner was an expert in long term care policy and service delivery; integrated care for older adults and other populations with complex, chronic, disabling, and medically fragile conditions; chronic care management; eldercare innovation; and comparative long term care systems. He also served on the board of the International Network on Integrated Care and was a member of the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Integrated Care.

New Books by Members

• “Grand Challenges for Social Work and Society,” edited by Rowena Fong, EdD, MSW; James Lubben, PhD/DSW, MPH, MSW, FGSA; and Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW. Published by Oxford University Press, 2018.
• “Foundations of Social Work Practice in the Field of Aging: A Competency-Based Approach (Second Edition),” by Colleen M. Galambos, PhD, LCSW, FGSA; Roberta R. Greene, PhD, FGSA; Nancy P. Kropf, PhD, FGSA; and Harriet L. Cohen, PhD. Published by NASW Press, 2018

Members in the News

• Dawn Carr, PhD, FGSA, and Natalie Sachs-Ericsson, PhD, were profiled in the Tallahassee Democrat on March 4 based on their research about the benefits of human-animal interaction in older adults. The two received a 2017 grant from GSA and the WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition to advance their work.

Colleague Connection

This month’s $25 amazon.com gift certificate winner: Lisa Gwyther, LCSW, FGSA

The recipient, who became eligible after referring new member Natalie Leary, MSW was randomly selected using randomizer.org. For more details on the Colleague Connection promotion visit www.geron.org/connection.

Member Spotlight

GSA’s website features monthly Q&A sessions with distinguished members. The current spotlight shines on: Stacy L. Andersen, PhD

Visit www.geron.org/membership to ask questions and read previous interviews. Connection promotion visit www.geron.org/connection.

Appleby Appointed to NACA Post

GSA CEO James Appleby, BSPharm, MPH, has been selected by the U.S. Secretary for Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II to serve a four-year term on the National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA). This body advises and consults with the secretary, the director of the National Institutes of Health, and the director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA) on matters related to the activities and policies of the NIA. The council meets three times per year and consists of 18 members. Appleby’s term will end December 31, 2021.

Aranda Assumes USC Roybal Center Directorship

María Aranda, LCSW, MPA, MSW, PhD, FGSA, has been appointed the executive director of the University of Southern California (USC) Edward R. Roybal Institute on Aging. The institute’s mission is to enhance the quality of life for older adults and persons aging with disabilities through research, innovation and advocacy. Aranda is an associate professor with joint appointments at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology.

Szonant Earns Distinction from American Academy of Nursing

The American Academy of Nursing has recognized Sarah L. Szanton, PhD, ANP, FAAN, FGSA, as an Academy Edge Runner for her successful intervention, Community Aging in Place: Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE). The Academy’s Raise the Voice Edge Runner initiative recognizes nurse-designed models of care or interventions which improve health, impact cost and influence policy. Szanton, a professor at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Bloomberg School of Public Health, and her cross-disciplinary colleague, sociologist Laura Gitlin, PhD, FGSA, designed CAPABLE to deliver a personalized, at home, intervention that decreases disability and improves physical strength and self-care skills of older adults.

Effros Receives UCLA Emeritus Distinction

Former GSA President Rita Effros, PhD, FGSA, has been named a recipient of the 2017-2018 Edward A. Dickson Emeritus Professorship Award at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where she is a professor emerita of pathology and laboratory medicine. She is a national and international leader in the field of the biology of aging. Her research has continued to receive National Institutes of Health support for cutting-edge work on mucosal immunology and the relationship between aging and HIV infection. She also serves as director of the Aging and AIDS Program Area for the UCLA AIDS Institute.

GSA Connect Corner

• Christina Victor, PhD, FGSA: “The BBC loneliness experiment has been developed by researchers at the University of Manchester, Brunel University, and the University of Exeter; it is funded by the Welcome Trust. The aim of the survey is to learn about experiences and attitudes towards friendship and community, and to get a really good picture of beliefs about the causes loneliness, what stops people feeling lonely, and what friends and communities can do to help.”
• Michèle J. Saunders, DMD, MPH, MS, FGSA: “The Eldercare Workforce Alliance Publishes New Brief, ‘End of Life Care: Preparing the Eldercare Workforce.’ The new issue brief explores the eldercare workforce and end of life care issues. The brief explores family caregivers, health care professionals, and direct care workers in relation to this important issue.”
After more than two decades of collaboration and friendship, this month I finally sat down to interview GSA’s Greg O’Neill, PhD. Greg has had several roles over the years at GSA, including director of public policy and professional affairs, associate editor of the Public Policy & Aging Report, director of the National Academy on an Aging Society, professional affairs analyst, historian, and more.

Suffice it to say, as he comes upon his 20th anniversary at GSA, it is a great time to thank him and get his perspective on how GSA and public policy have evolved. So, thank you Greg; it has been a pleasure to work with, learn from, and grow with you. You bring intelligence, thoughtfulness, and an amazing breadth of knowledge to GSA, and you also happen to be one of the nicest individuals I have ever had the pleasure to know.

Brian: As a foundational figure in GSA’s public policy activities, how have GSA, the Academy, and the aging field changed?

Greg: GSA’s National Academy on an Aging Society was established through a grant from the Administration on Aging, and the goal was that it would be self-sufficient within five years. I was hired for a very specific task — to analyze data from the Health and Retirement Study for a series of information profiles on chronic and disabling conditions among older Americans. Coming directly from grad school with a PhD in sociology with a focus on demography, I had no experience in policy analysis. My role was to crunch the numbers and hand it off to my colleagues to translate my findings into policy-relevant, accessible information. Over time, I learned from observing them how to write for this new audience of thought leaders, policymakers, the press, and the public.

One big change over time is in the landscape of funding for our aging-focused work. In the early days, we relied on big grants from private foundations. These days, working with GSA members, we find ourselves trying to navigate the challenging world of large government grants. We’ve also made an effort to court non-traditional funders in the private sector, including pharmaceutical companies, financial services institutions, and technology businesses. Indeed, I am passionate about the technology sector knowing more about the work that GSA members do, and our members knowing more about the unique opportunities to collaborate with both established and emerging technology companies and start-ups. To that end, in 2009, I started Aging Means Business — an ecosystem of efforts, including pre-conferences, annual meeting symposia, poster sessions, an IAGG conference event, an e-newsletter, and a Twitter feed (@agingmeansbiz).

My interest in this area was sparked by my conversations and e-mails with late GSA president Charles “Chuck” Longino from Wake Forest University. I met him in 1995 at my first GSA annual meeting, when I was a graduate student at Duke University. The 1995 meeting was highly unusual in that it took place during a government shutdown and a snowstorm that shut down the East Coast. He took me under his wing, introducing me to leaders in the aging field, and showing me the ropes of how to take full advantage of the conference’s many daytime (and nighttime!) networking opportunities.

Chuck had pioneered the connection between population aging and business. As president of AGHE [GSA’s educational organization, the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education], he set the theme of its 2003 annual meeting as “AGHE Means Business” — a title that I repurposed later, in his honor. He recognized that the aging community needed to be more open to the business community, especially since that is where many aging students find work.

Another big change over time is the pace at which our work takes place. For example, under grant funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies, I spent more than nine years working on the topic of civic engagement. Under the auspices of the academy, I carried out a range of activities and created products, including town hall meetings in connection with the White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA), several articles and book chapters, an edited volume of GSA articles (“Civic Engagement in an Older America”), and an ideas summit in Washington, DC. In fact, you and I served as track coordinators.

We’ve been part of several successful Hill briefings in the past, such as those on senior entrepreneurship and civic engagement. However, under Patricia D’Antonio’s leadership, we have been more active in proposing topics related to our key projects, connecting our members so that they can testify, and crafting press releases, letters to the editor, and op-eds to highlight our members’ research on these timely issues (as we recently did on over-the-counter hearing aids). GSA also has increased the number of coalitions it supports through sign-on letters and events. These actions are giving our membership a stronger voice on the Hill and a central presence in key policy discussions.
One thing that has been consistent is the quality of GSA's journals. The Academy's *Public Policy & Aging Report* joined GSA's other journals as part of the Oxford University Press in 2014. Another is our continued focus on curating high-quality content in the aging field, such as our new From Policy to Practice reports and our bi-monthly policy and aging e-newsletter, which is available free to members. Finally, this work would have not been possible without the key contributions of GSA members — their support has been unwavering over GSA's history.

**Brian:** You have worked with and befriended hundreds of GSA members over your 20 years. Who are your mentors and what are the most exciting discoveries or revelations you have seen?

**Greg:** Although I had not planned to focus on aging when I entered graduate school, my mentors at Duke University — Linda George, George Myers, Debby Gold, George Maddox — had a different plan for me! Best of all, after I left Duke I remained connected to them because GSA was their professional “home” in aging. Carol Schutz and Linda Harootyan made me feel “at home” at GSA from day one — and I’m very grateful to have had their guidance and friendship over the years. Joseph Coughlin, Mary Furlong, David Lindeman, Janice Wassel, and Rick Moody have been wonderful partners as we have explored together how to create a more fruitful relationship between the gerontological and business communities. It has been an honor and a pleasure to have worked with Rob Hudson, *Public Policy & Aging Report* editor and chief, over the past 18 years (72 issues!). He has offered me a master class in public policy and aging. Finally, as the staff person to the Social Research, Policy, and Practice Section and GSA's Public Policy Committee, I’ve worked with a host of talented GSA members — too numerous to name — who have volunteered their time and energy.

**Brian:** One of the more interesting dilemmas that I see for GSA is that we have members who work in every aspect of aging policy, so it would be nearly impossible to weigh in on all those policies and related programs on Capitol Hill. How do you sort through this?

**Greg:** That has been an interesting challenge over the years. On one hand, our strength is in the knowledge, experience, and diversity of our members. On the other hand, we do not have the resources to weigh in on every issue on which our members have expertise. So, we have — with the guidance of GSA leadership, the Public Policy Committee, and you — developed ways to play meaningful roles on various aging policy issues through work on coalitions, but most importantly by broadly sharing the work of our members with policy makers and Hill staff. As we say, facts and data matter to good policy makers.

Today, the academy is reshaping itself. It has begun strategic planning to refine and revitalize its mission, activities, and governance. You conducted a survey last year that has informed us what people who work on Capitol Hill think about GSA and its academy. It has forced us to ask some probing questions: What does a think tank do in today’s world? What kinds of communications are most effective with today’s audiences? If we were to start out today, what would we do differently? Today, we use a broad range of social media communications to amplify our message. Although social media metrics provide us with a gauge of our impact, we still struggle to assess how influential our total sum of efforts has been. We attend Hill briefings in support of our colleagues’ causes, and vice versa. It is challenging to assign an ROI to such efforts — as it is equally challenging to interpret what 1,000 “Likes” on a post about our Hill activity equates to in terms of impact/influence or how it may affect the ultimate outcomes of changing viewpoints and passing legislation. I’m really excited to be rethinking the Academy’s future — and I’d like to thank James Appleby for creating a new culture of innovation at GSA.

**Brian:** We have seen many GSA members testify before Congress and regulatory agencies. How do we motivate members to do more in terms of using their knowledge and research to educate policy makers?

**Greg:** I saw a lot of value in the work GSA did in training the Hartford Scholars and the Change AGEnts. We need to continue to incorporate those kinds of opportunities in our annual meetings and also let GSA members inspire their peers by sharing the great work many are doing in education and advocacy. In this issue, readers will see that another GSA member, Pamela Teaster, was up on the Hill recently. We also need to share widely information on the good work of members of Congress who are trying to fill the shoes of Claude Pepper and John Heinz because we need to show our appreciation for their efforts.

Looking back, I’m very proud of some of the Capitol Hill briefings and events that we organized, such as the Senate Aging Committee 50th anniversary celebration; the Civic Engagement breakfast briefing; and the Serve America Act passage reception. However, I’m also a lot more aware of the fact that there’s a lot that happens in the Capitol that is just for show. That is, one learns that events like hearings or the introduction of new proposed legislation mean very little if they are not followed by implementation — particularly funding! Brian — you’ve been a great resource for helping me to understand the mechanics and ins and outs of how things really work on the Hill. Your guidance has been especially valuable since, as a Canadian, the government I learned about in high school included members of Parliament seated in a House of Commons.

**Brian:** Now I understand why you keep suggesting we send letters to the prime minister. Greg, it has been a pleasure. Thanks again for your time and all you have done for GSA.
Join an Interest Group Today!

GSA has 45 interest groups covering a range of topics related to older adults and aging. Interest groups are a wonderful way to connect and network with other GSA members from a variety of professions and backgrounds who share related interests. Activity varies by interest group, and could include organizing symposia at the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting, collaborating on journal articles, and tapping into the expertise of other interest group members throughout the year. Members can join as many interest groups they like. Visit www.geron.org/interestgroups to find a list of all active interest groups along with their purpose, activities, and conveners.

To join an interest group:
- Log in to GSA Connect at connect.geron.org.
- Go to your profile page, and click the pencil icon next to “Contact Details,” which is located under your photo on the left hand side of the page.
- This will take you to the first page, “Update my information”; scroll to the bottom of this page and click “next.”
- On the second page, near the bottom, click “Select Interest Groups.”

Pitch Event Makes History on GSA Connect

The Technology and Aging Interest Group took advantage of their GSA Connect community to host Virtual Fast Pitch, the first-ever online event on GSA Connect. Inspired by the successful Minute Madness held last July at the IAGG World Congress, this new event featured four technology projects of GSA members that enhance the lives of older people.

On March 22, participants posted about their projects on the Technology and Aging Interest Group GSA Connect community. Pre-assigned moderators replied to the posts with feedback and questions, and several rounds of online dialogue occurred. Virtual Fast Pitch was organized by the interest group’s convener, Charlene Quinn, PhD, RN, FAAN, FGSA. Serving as moderators were Nancy Gell, PT, MPH, PhD; Patricia Heyn, PhD, FGSA, FACRM; and Judith Matthews, PhD, MPH, RN.

The projects featured were:
- “New Frontiers in Aging: An Innovative Program in a Virtual Environment,” by Lynn Berrett, LCSW, and Joshua Berrett, PhD. This project addresses the issue of loneliness among older adults through a virtual meeting place where older adults can participate in group activities 24/7.
- “DELIVER [The Dementia Expert Link to Improve Veterans Experience with Rural Caregiving]: Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Referral, Resources and Interventions,” by Patricia Griffiths, PhD. This program is developing and testing an infrastructure for assessing rural veterans living with dementia and their caregivers and navigating them to effective and existing programs that can best meet and accommodate their individual needs independent of geographic constraints.
- “EngAGE: Physical Activity and Socialization for Older Adults,” by Louise Hawkley, PhD, NORC, and Megan Huisingh-Scheetz, MD, MPH. This program is an age-adapted technology solution being developed with input from older adults and their caregivers using a participatory design approach. By taking advantage of smart voice and screen capabilities, EngAGE is able to provide evidence-based exercise programming and social interaction capacities.
- “The Sandwich Generation Diner: An E-health Intervention for Intergenerational Family Care Partners of Older Adults,” by Ann Steffen, PhD. This program’s website features four modules that address specific family healthcare concerns and applies self-efficacy theory through videotaped narrative vignettes that depict actors encountering and responding to common healthcare challenges.

Continued from page 1 – Journal Shows U.S. Rate of Dementia Declining, But Numbers Growing

Future” — stems from a May 2017 workshop funded by the National Institute on Aging that aimed to broaden the understanding of dementia trends, including a study that examines how education levels influence years expected to be lived with dementia.

The studies also look at the impact of cardiovascular disease on dementia. Reducing cardiovascular diseases and other chronic diseases is critical for the health of individuals and families, but because such advantages allow people to live to older ages when dementia is more common, the number of dementia cases may not decrease.

“By far the most powerful way to lower both the proportion and number of people with dementia is to develop prevention strategies and treatments that would directly delay the onset of dementia,” said Langa, a research professor of the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, professor of Internal Medicine, and research scientist at the Veterans Affairs Ann Arbor Center for Clinical Management Research.

Together, the studies generated a number of cross-cutting themes. In addition to the overall decline in dementia prevalence, the supplement’s studies show the following:
- Some groups of older adults in the U.S. are living fewer years with dementia.
- Racial and socioeconomic disparities in dementia are large and not diminishing.
- Rising levels of education partially account for the decline of dementia prevalence, but more research is needed to understand the role cardiovascular risk factors in trends of dementia.
- Reducing the incidence of diabetes and hypertension in midlife will increase the future number of cases of dementia because people will live longer. Therefore, postponing the onset of dementia directly is the most effective way to further reduce the size of the population living with dementia.

GSA members can access the issue for free by logging in at www.geron.org/publications.
Make the Most of Your ESPO Membership: Join an Interest Group!

By Stacy Andersen, PhD, and Aaron Guest, MPH, MSW

One of the most valuable (and often underutilized) benefits of your GSA membership is access to 45 interest groups, which bring together people with shared interests on specific topics or issues within the field of aging — from across disciplines and sections to foster discussions and special programming.

As an ESPO member, joining an interest group is particularly important because many groups offer unique resources and opportunities that are vital to early career development. By joining an interest group, ESPO members can network within their specialty. GSA interest groups cover a wide array of topics and issues, from “Reminiscence, Life Story, and Narrative” and “Technology and Aging” to “Environmental Gerontology” and “Qualitative Research,” to name a few.

Interest groups not only meet at the Annual Scientific Meeting but also offer year-round opportunities for networking, collaboration, and engagement.

There are multiple benefits to joining an interest group. These include:

• Maximizing your engagement in GSA by taking full advantage of membership benefits
• Connecting with colleagues in the aging field who share common interests
• Establishing personal connections in a small group setting
• Identifying potential collaborators and co-authors
• Getting feedback on projects from top researchers in your field
• Receiving updates on cutting-edge research and policies on specific topics
• Participating in online discussions on high priority issues on GSA Connect
• Submitting an abstract for consideration in a symposium sponsored by the interest group
• Attending meetings hosted by the interest group at the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting

• Joining social functions or activities/outing arranged by the interest group
• Learning to lead an interest group by serving as a convener

How do I find an Interest Group?

Under the “Stay Connected” menu of the GSA website at www.geron.org, you can find the list of all active interest groups along with their purpose, activities, and convener(s). The conveners are a great point of contact if you would like more information about an interest group. They are always thrilled to hear from emerging scholars and students.

How Do I Join an Interest Group?

To join an interest group, follow the simple instructions at www.geron.org/interestgroups, and take a look at the new Interest Group News section on page 6 of this newsletter.

After adding an interest group, you will be able to view the GSA Connect page for that interest group. In these individual communities you can gain access to their resources, news feeds, members, and networking opportunities. Log in now to meet other group members and even share a recent resource or news piece of interest to you! Then, at the Annual Scientific Meeting, be sure to attend your interest group meetings and related sessions. Everyone is always invited to the meetings, so even if you would like to learn more about an interest group before joining, feel free to drop by!

Also, keep an eye out for the interest groups that are featured periodically within the ESPO Community on GSA Connect. Each month we highlight interest groups with a quick overview and updates on what they are currently working on and what activities are being planned.
GSA congratulates the following candidates at the conclusion of the 2018 elections:

Society-Wide

President-Elect
Kathryn Hyer, MPP, PhD, FGSA

Treasurer-Elect
Janet M. Wilmuth, PhD, FGSA

Behavioral and Social Sciences Section

Chair-Elect
Tamara A. Baker, PhD, FGSA

Member-at-Large
Karen Hooker, PhD, FGSA

Member-at-Large
Ronica N. Rooks, PhD, FGSA

Member-at-Large
Ishan C. Williams, PhD, FGSA

GSA expresses appreciation to all the members who voted, and to all the candidates who volunteered to stand for office.
2018 Election Results

Candidates, who will take their offices at the GSA 2018 Annual Scientific Meeting.

Biological Sciences Section

Chair-Elect
Stephen L. Helfand, MD, FGSA

Health Sciences Section

Chair-Elect
Cynthia J. Brown, MD, MSPH, FGSA

Social Research, Policy, and Practice Section

Chair-Elect
Philip A. Rozario, PhD, FGSA

Emerging Scholar and Professional Organization

Chair-Elect
Darina V. Petrovsky, PhD, RN

Secretary
Jacquelyn A. Minahan, MA

Communications Chair
Anna Zaia, BS
Cognitive Interventions Special Issue Slated for Series B
The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences has issued a call for papers for a special issue — to be guest edited by Brent Small, PhD, FGSA — that seeks to evaluate the role of cognitive interventions on the short-term and long-term cognitive health of older adults, while also simultaneously promoting open science practices for this topic and for the field of psychological aging as a whole. The ability of brain games or more structured cognitive training interventions to promote cognitive health among older adults or even reduce the incidence of dementia disorders remains an important, if not contentious, area of inquiry. Abstracts are due by July 1. Please review the full call for papers at bit.ly/2v4FQxA.

Series B Planning Special Issue on Mild Cognitive Impairment
The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences is welcoming papers reporting cutting-edge quantitative research on psychological aspects of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) for a forthcoming special issue. Scholarly and clinical interest in MCI — the transitional stage between healthy aging and dementia — has grown exponentially since the first clinical criteria were developed in 1999. However, controversies still exist about how best to operationalize the clinical (and research) criteria for MCI to best predict progression to dementia; about what cognitive, neuroimaging, and other biomarkers are most sensitive to early cognitive impairment and neurodegeneration; and about how living in this transitional stage affects one’s functioning in the social, problem-solving, and everyday functioning domains. Full manuscripts are due by October 1. Access full details at bit.ly/2v4FQxA.

D-Galactose Affects Sexes Differently, Study Finds
A research study — from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in collaboration with the University of La Laguna — that was recently published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences demonstrates in mice the biological relevance of sex in the effects of accelerated aging caused by a chronic treatment of D-galactose, a sugar found abundantly in milk and to a lesser extent in fruits and vegetables. At high doses, this substance accelerates ageing in males, affecting them at sensory and motor level and in their neuro-immuno-endocrine system, while females experience alterations in learning and their ability to register information about their surroundings and orientation. However, at low doses the treatment has positive effects, especially in males. Access the full article at doi.org/10.1093/gerona/gly031.

New Journal Supplement Tracks Dementia Trends
Robert F Schoeni, PhD, Vicki A Freedman, PhD, and Kenneth M Langa, MD, PhD, have led the production of a new supplemental issue of The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences that examines trends in dementia across the U.S. The nine studies contained within provide new evidence on whether dementia trends have been more favorable, and reasons for those trends. Learn more about this supplement — titled “Trends in the Prevalence and Incidence of Dementia: Causes, Disparities, and Projections for the Future” — on the cover of this newsletter.

Series A Special Issue Looks at Mediterranean Diet
A series of six articles appearing in the March issue of The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences found new correlations between a Mediterranean diet and healthy aging outcomes — while also underscoring the need for careful approaches to the use of data in order to measure the diet’s potential benefits. Among their findings, the articles report on underlying mechanisms of the diet; the positive relationship between the diet and physical and cognitive function; the value of taking a coenzyme Q10 supplement while adhering to the diet; and the role of the diet in reducing inflammation. But in several of the studies, the level of benefit was dependent on how adherent to the diet was measured. “Greater clarity on how this diet is defined, in both interventions and observational studies, will be critical in the aim of achieving a consensus on how to optimally apply this dietary pattern towards maximizing healthy aging,” state Michelle A. Mendez, PhD, and Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences Editor-in-Chief Anne B. Newman, MD, FGSA, in an opening editorial. GSA members can view the full issue by logging in at geron.org and proceeding to academic.oup.com/biomedgerontology/issues/73/3.

Longevity Ascribed to Extremely Long-Lived Mother
For many years, scientists in Leiden, The Netherlands, have been monitoring 421 exceptional families with several members who have lived way beyond the age of 90. A new analysis of these extremely long-lived persons, their siblings, and parents now shows that longevity in these families is passed on mainly through the mother. The results of this study have been published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences.

“From our analysis of the 944 extremely long-lived men and women monitored in the Leiden Longevity Study, we know that they live longer than people born in the same year and that they are not affected by age related diseases until later in life. We also know that their parents and siblings outlive their birth cohort members. And this, despite two centuries of infections, famine and war,” said Eline Slagboom, PhD, a professor of molecular epidemiology at Leiden University.

In the new analysis, PhD student Niels van den Berg found that especially the extremely long-lived mothers pass on longevity to their children, and not the longest-lived fathers.
“Children of a long-lived mother and a non-long-lived father outlive children of a long-lived father and a non-long-lived mother, or of two parents who are not long-lived. However, this only applies to families where the mothers are in the top one percent longest survivors of her birth cohort,” van den Berg said. The researchers also observed that the survival advantage of these family members does not begin later in life; rather, they have a greater chance of survival than their contemporaries right from birth.

According to the researchers, the finding that longevity is passed mainly through the maternal ties is in line with in with the notion that predisposition to longevity lies in the so-called mitochondrial DNA. In contrast with the nuclear DNA, a child receives its mitochondrial DNA only from its mother, not from both parents. Another explanation may be that long-lived mothers in the late nineteenth century were physically healthier and therefore had larger and healthier babies than mothers who were not long-lived.

“We had expected the affluence of long-lived fathers in this historical period to have an impact as well, but it seems that the mother’s physiology is much more important in extreme longevity in our study,” said Slagboom.

The finding brings science a step closer to identifying the genes for a long life.

“We now know even more precisely whose genes we need to map in order to find out why some people survive into extreme old age but also, and above all, why they age healthily,” said Slagboom. “Lifespan in the general population not very heritable, so our research confirms that it’s only in the rare families who have already survived longer than ordinary mortals over the past two centuries that we stand a chance of finding something.”

Muscle Quality Associated with Severity of Forward Spinal Curvature

A new study published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences reports an important link between healthy muscles in the mid-back and spinal posture in older adults.

“Women and men with indications of stronger muscles on CT scans were less likely to have hyperkyphosis, or excessive forward spinal curvature, compared to those with characteristics of weaker muscles,” said the study’s principal investigator, Elizabeth “Lisa” Samelson, PhD, an associate scientist at the Institute for Aging Research and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School.

Samelson and investigators at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Boston Medical Center used CT scans to evaluate properties of thoracic (upper) and lumbar (lower) spine muscles and assess spinal curvature in cohort members of the Framingham Study, a collection of data from Framingham, Massachusetts, residents and their offspring dating back to the 1940s.

The causes of hyperkyphosis are not well understood. Traditionally, clinicians attributed hyperkyphosis to vertebral fractures. More recently, however, researchers have shown that as many as two-thirds of older adults with hyperkyphosis have no evidence of vertebral fractures. Thus, there is growing interest in the role of other factors, such as the strength of the trunk muscles.

Lead author Amanda Lorbergs, PhD, explained, “Our study was the first to use CT imaging to evaluate the influence of mid-back muscles on severity of kyphosis. We found that adults with smaller and fat-infiltrated muscles in the mid-back, but not the low back, had a more accentuated forward curvature of the spine. CT imaging is advantageous, because the muscle quantity and quality measures tell us about the muscle’s function, such that decreased muscle mass and increased fat infiltration are characteristic of weaker muscles.”

The authors conclude that the ability to detect signs of poor muscle strength from CT images may help to identify individuals at risk of hyperkyphosis and understand which muscle groups are important to target in interventions aimed at preventing hyperkyphosis.

This study was supported with funding from the National Institute on Aging and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute’s Framingham Heart Study.

Continued from page 1 – Member Provides Senate Testimony on Older Adult Guardianships

Teaster went on to recommend that system reformation include the following:

• Greater clarity and training when persons assume the role of guardian ad litem, and of guardians themselves;
• Deeper consideration of appropriateness and scope of appointment;
• Bonding;
• Meaningful insertion of person-centeredness and supported decision making;
• Limited orders;
• Reasonable, appropriate, and timely monitoring post establishment;
• Constant consideration of the restoration of rights;
• Zero tolerance for the pockets of collusion and corruption that exist around this country among actors in the system.

“Now is the time for a system that acts in the name of beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice, and preserves autonomy whenever possible to demand and receive adequate resources,” Teaster said. “System implementation reforms are prescient and possible. Guardians who abuse, neglect, or exploit older adults should receive enhanced penalties for their crimes. And, again, persons under guardianship should enjoy supported decision making whenever possible and have their rights restored in part or totally with all deliberate speed.”
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The priority application deadline for the Fall 2018 term is March 15, 2018. We will continue to review applications on a rolling basis after this deadline until classes start in August.

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School of Gerontology
The Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, a unit of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), invites applications for a faculty position in gerontology or geriatric/palliative medicine with health care, services delivery and/or policy research experience or training. Candidates must have a strong interest in building a services or policy research portfolio working collaboratively with a multidisciplinary group of social scientists, clinicians and policy scholars and a track record of successfully competing for research grants or high potential for federal funding.

The successful candidate will develop a program of research in any of a number of potential areas including, but not limited to, behavioral health, minority health, health equity, trauma exposure, violence, biopsychosocial behaviors in prevention and treatment, chronic disease management and health outcomes, and evaluation of health policy and delivery system initiatives. Research addressing population health, translational scientific research, and the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups is highly desirable.

A doctoral degree in gerontology, doctor of geriatric/palliative medicine or a doctoral degree in psychology, sociology, nursing or social work combined with research, background or training in gerontology or aging studies is required. A strong theoretical grounding and quantitative and/or qualitative research skills with excellent communication skills to support developing a rigorous program of research are expected. The successful candidate will be jointly appointed in the Institute for Health with tenure-track or tenured appointment in a Rutgers University school or department. Opportunity exists for appointment as a Chancellor's Scholar. Salary and academic rank will be commensurate with scholarly achievements including funded research, publication record and relevant professional experience.

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RRF Accepting New Grant Proposals
The Retirement Research Foundation (RRF) is a private foundation devoted exclusively to aging and retirement issues. Through its responsive grants program, the RRF supports advocacy; direct service; education and training programs for professionals working with elders; and research to seek causes and solutions to significant problems of older adults. Proposals for direct service projects are being considered from organizations based in seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Wisconsin, or Florida. Advocacy, training, and research projects, all with national relevance, are being considered from organizations located anywhere in the U.S. The next proposal application deadline is August 1; optional letters of intent may be submitted by June 15. Visit www.rrf.org to learn more.

NIA Offers Grant on Health Disparities
The National Institute on Aging (NIA) has issued a funding opportunity announcement designed to support research that addresses disparities in aging and health, with emphasis on preclinical and clinical studies. The NIA’s health disparities research goals are to understand environmental and sociocultural factors and related behavioral and biological mechanisms that diminish health and reduce life expectancy for populations that experience health disparities; develop strategies to increase life expectancy and health span among aging adults and improve the health status of elders from underserved and disadvantaged populations; and use research insights and advances to inform policies that reduce health disparities. Applications are due July 16. View bit.ly/2I4KUFf for the full announcement.

Federal Funds Slated to Support Next-Gen ADRD Researchers
The National Institute on Aging and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke have issued a funding opportunity announcement to support important and innovative research in areas in which more scientific investigation is needed to improve the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD). The program seeks to facilitate the next generation of researchers in the U.S. to pursue research and academic careers in neurosciences, ADRD, and healthy brain aging; and to stimulate established researchers who are not currently doing ADRD research to perform pilot studies toward developing new innovative ADRD research programs that leverage and build upon their existing expertise. Applications are due July 3. Review the full announcement at bit.ly/2FnnAPX.

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