



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

# Zuckerman Family Center for Prevention and Health Promotion

## 2024 IMPACT REPORT

# IMPACT

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The Zuckerman Family Center for Prevention & Health Promotion (ZFCPHP) at the Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) at the University of Arizona (UA) continues to serve the Southern Arizona community through educational programs, outreach, and training. Our staff and faculty are committed to sharing high-quality public health education and resources with our community partners, university students, and beyond. Our 2024 annual report highlights our program progress and student success as they relate to our community impact. In addition, we welcome a new Center Director, Dr. David O. Garcia.

# IMPORTANCE

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Embodying the UA values of compassion and inclusion, the ZFCPHP creates and implements health promotion initiatives to support underserved populations in Southern Arizona. Our programs provide opportunities for community members and young people to learn about the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices in an encouraging environment with the goal of improving well-being. Additionally, our Center staff recruit, train, and mentor MEZCOPH and UA students through service-based learning and community engagement. The ZFCPHP faculty & staff commit to adapting outreach and programmatic efforts to align with community needs and reach diverse stakeholders.

# PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

## SUPPORTING YOUTH & FAMILIES

### HEALTHY 2B ME SUMMER CAMP (H2BM)

The Healthy 2B Me (H2BM) Summer Camp was held at three local Tucson locations for its 12<sup>th</sup> summer. We welcomed new MEZCOPH undergraduate interns and a wonderful group of children to Dietz K-8 School, Pasqua Yaqui Boys & Girls Club and the John Valenzuela Youth Center. We enjoyed the summer program with the help of the ZFCPHP Staff and other UA professionals that shared their public health knowledge. The campers always look forward to learning from MEZCOPH students. This summer our undergraduate/graduate interns included: Cheryl Nguyen, Hannah Jagoda, Nikky Torres, Nina Adams, and Percy Villegas. Special thanks to ZFCPHP Center Program Coordinator, Sabrina Plattner, for leading camp operations in Nicole Falbo's absence this summer. If you or someone you know is looking for an interactive, fun internship please see our website for more information on opportunities with our Center including H2BM.



### GROWING GIRLS

Growing Girls is a 21 week psychosocial intervention for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls targeted to improve self-esteem, reduce relational aggression, enhance social skills, and increase peer connectedness. The 2023-2024 school year was the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Growing Girls at Estes Elementary School and the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Growing Girls at Quail Run Elementary School in the Marana Unified School District, directed by Lindsay Bingham, MPH, CHES® (Psychosocial



Wellness Program Coordinator). Before weekly lessons, students participated in movement activities (e.g., Build a Dance, Broken Wheel, Crab Soccer, relay races) to reinforce program goals and thematic messages, such as friendship and communication. To support a variety of learners and enhance skill acquisition, Group Leaders developed new materials, slideshows, and activities, including laminated conversation cards during a lesson about making new friends and visuals to distinguish conflict versus bullying, for example. ZFCPHP provided students with healthy snacks each week during the program.

During 2023-24, 38 students participated and learned about personal identity, building healthy friendships, positive thinking, self-compassion, assertive communication (i.e., standing up for yourself), solving problems and seeking help, bullying and conflict resolution, media messages, body kindness, development and puberty, self-care, and planning for the future. Five undergraduate UA students (Venina Baltazar, Elizabeth Brandhuber, Anissa Ferris, Jaedyn Maher, and Grace Weigel) served as Growing Girls Group Leaders, facilitating the program across both schools. The Growing Girls facilitators represented four colleges across campus, creating a dynamic multidisciplinary leadership team to support the young people we served. Group Leaders received facilitation preparation and training in the Nurtured Heart Approach® throughout the year to best support their participant groups. Last year, we observed the best attendance in Growing Girls in several years, which was a testament to our resolute Group Leaders, the community they built in the classroom, and the commitment of our school partners and parents. Thirty-three students graduated from Growing Girls in May 2024 after attending over 80% of program sessions, including our field trip to the UA with the GAME program.



In addition to our success among elementary-aged students, we are proud to report that Growing Girls continues to serve as a professional stepping-stone for our Group Leaders. Currently, many of our former Group Leaders are in graduate programs to pursue careers in

public health, school counseling, marriage and family counseling, and nursing. As we look forward to the next phase of Growing Girls, we will share the program with community partners and provide sample lessons from the curriculum on our website in the near future.



## **GUYS AFTER-SCHOOL MENTORSHIP & EDUCATION (GAME)**

Guys After-School Mentorship and Education, or “GAME,” is a 21 week psychosocial intervention for 5th and 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys targeted to improve self-esteem, enhance social skills and mental well-being, and provide supportive mentoring during the transition to middle school. The 2023-2024 school year was the 6<sup>th</sup> year of GAME at Estes Elementary School and the 4<sup>th</sup> year of GAME at Quail Run Elementary School in the Marana Unified School District, directed by Lindsay Bingham. Before weekly lessons, students participated in 30 minutes of structured, team-based movement activities (e.g., Accumulator, Blob Tag, Crab Soccer, kickball) to help students build communication skills and teamwork as well as individual-level games to improve focus and concentration, such as “Head It, Catch It”. At the end of each session, Group Leaders and students returned outside to enjoy 30 minutes of unstructured free play, allowing students to receive additional mentorship from Group Leaders and bond with other students outside of lessons. Last year, Group Leaders developed topic-specific slideshows and new discussion questions to accommodate a variety of learners and encourage skill-building. ZFCPPH provided students with healthy snacks each week during the program.



During 2023-2024, 31 boys participated and learned about coping with intense emotions, staying positive, teamwork, responsibility, peer pressure, bullying and conflict resolution, problem-solving and asking for help, self-esteem, body image, media messages, development and puberty, and planning for the future. Two undergraduate UA students



(Brix Bootz & Ethan Hinnant) and one Quail Run Elementary School staff member (Trevor Lee) served as GAME Group Leaders, facilitating the program across both schools. UA Group Leaders received facilitation preparation and training in the Nurtured Heart Approach® throughout the year to best support their participant groups, including a 2-part intensive training and multiple in-services. One of our highlights of the 2023-2024 school year was our annual field trip to the UA with the Growing Girls program, where we explored the campus with a new scavenger hunt,

visited 3 colleges/programs, and talked with students about their goals and dreams for the future: Many students expressed interest in going to UA for college. Twenty-eight boys graduated from GAME in May after attending over 80% of program sessions, one of our biggest graduating classes since the program began in 2017.

After several successful years at MUSD, the GAME program has concluded. We are incredibly thankful for our longstanding partnership with Estes Elementary School, the first home for our psychosocial wellness programs and where we piloted GAME in 2017 before creating a comprehensive curriculum. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we began our partnership with Quail Run Elementary School, offering GAME to support their students' emotional well-being with quality mentorship and health education during such a critical time. We are excited for the next opportunity to bring the program to adolescent boys in the Southern Arizona community.





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## CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

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### ZEN DEN



ZFCPHP and Activate Tucson joined forces with Rivera Elementary School to combat childhood obesity prevention and child health wellness. Through an extensive needs assessment with the school's faculty and staff, it was revealed that addressing the stress and anxiety of the children was paramount. Research underscores the direct link between daily stressors and the body's reaction to stress, highlighting the importance of preventing oxidative stress to stave off a multitude of diseases. As schools emerged from the pandemic, Rivera School aimed to establish a safe haven where children could decompress to alleviate stress.

However, limited funding hindered the creation of an engaging and inviting space. Thanks to the Catalyzing Communities seed grant funds and BeachFleishman, a local tax firm, efforts were directed toward supporting an innovative Zen Den. This space provides both children and teachers a place to unwind and reduce stress effectively. Rivera Elementary teachers and staff created the room with materials supported by Activate Tucson. BeachFleishman provided a generous donation to help purchase items from teachers' wish lists. Sabrina Plattner and MEZCOPH MPH students have devised an ongoing survey to gauge the students' experience with the Zen Den. Starting in the spring of 2024, Sunnyside Unified School District (SUSD) featured a designated health and wellness category for tax donations on their district website.

The Zen Den and calming corners proved successful in their inaugural year with reported reduced stress levels and improved emotional coping skills. All teachers endorsed expanding similar spaces to other schools, praising their own use for relaxation. Teachers



highlighted the importance of providing calm, cozy spaces for overstimulated students, especially those with special needs. The Zen Den facilitated yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practices with plans for expansion across SUSD and other Tucson schools.

***“Having the Zen Den as a whole class meditation moment was a game changer.”  
-Rivera Elementary teacher***

## **POLICY, SYSTEM & ENVIRONMENT CHANGE**

Lauren Erdelyi, PhD Candidate, with The Childhood Obesity Initiative successfully designed and defended her dissertation on the Arizona Public School Tax Credit inequities in reducing childhood obesity in Arizona. Her research and dissertation assessed drivers of Childhood Obesity in Tucson, identified by Activate Tucson, in partnership with the Catalyzing Communities program with Tufts University and the ZFCPHP. The evaluation focused on determining the feasibility of a study to assess Activate Tucson Coalition’s pilot initiative to create resources to improve awareness of the Public-School Tax Credit (PSTC). The evaluation sought to understand tax and accounting professional knowledge and beliefs regarding the PSTC, engagement with clients about the critical need for the PSTC, and to identify opportunities to improve education and awareness resources available to this population and the public. The evaluation provides preliminary data to guide Activate Tucson’s efforts to leverage tax policy to address drivers of childhood obesity in Tucson and across Arizona to improve child health outcomes more equitably. Dr. Erdelyi’s Program Implementation Guide on Leveraging Public and Private Partnerships to Address Drivers of Childhood Obesity and the policy brief advocated for changing legislation for health equitable outcomes for low-income children and families. We will continue to advocate for these recommended changes in the PSTC laws so all children can thrive in Arizona.



## HEALTHY HABITS TUCSON (HHT)

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adopting healthy lifestyle habits at an early age can lower the risk of obesity and developing related diseases that can reduce life expectancy. Healthy Habits Tucson (HHT) was developed as an Intergenerational Obesity Prevention program to engage individuals aged fifty-five and older to contribute to community wellbeing by sharing life experiences and wisdom to inspire younger generations by adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

Through collaborative activities, HHT volunteers and MEZCOPH students offer practical skills and effective strategies across life stages, while fostering mutual understanding, respect and breaking down stereotypes. By serving as positive role models, the senior volunteers demonstrate the importance of prioritizing health and wellbeing at every age. These interactions not only benefit the youth, but also reinforce the commitment to health and wellness for the volunteers. The program offers a unique opportunity for intergenerational engagement promoting physical activities, nutritional choices, and mental wellbeing. Additionally, it provides seniors with the opportunity for social connectedness, and purposeful engagement while enriching the lives of the children. Together, MEZCOPH students, youth and senior citizens develop skills for achieving health and wellness thus establishing a foundation for a successful and healthy life. HHT conducts



weekly lessons for children ages 7 to 11 every Thursday afternoon from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. at the Roy Drachman Boys and Girl Clubhouse in South Tucson. The program covered various topics including nutrition, physical activity, and wellness. The interactive activities and healthy snacks were well received by the children, who eagerly anticipate the program each year.

## HEALTHY SCHOOLS TUCSON (HST)

Healthy Schools Tucson (HST) has reached nearly 1,600 middle school students since 2018 with the delivery of lessons focusing on nutrition, physical activity, and wellness education. *The Student Wellness Questionnaire* evaluation demonstrates that middle school students have gained significant knowledge and adapted behavior crucial for healthy lifestyles choices, thereby aiding in preventing obesity and reducing health disparities among vulnerable youth. In 2024, for its 6<sup>th</sup> year, the Saints Peter and Paul Middle School (SPPS) welcomed back the HST Program and the MEZCOPH student interns to address childhood obesity and other important health topics for their students. This year, MEZCOPH created an interactive workbook for students to engage with and reflect on lessons learned, along with flyers to share with parents and guardians. Teachers continue to see observable changes in students' health and wellness journey, such as incorporating healthy foods into their lunches/snacks and reducing sugar-sweetened beverages as well as an increase in physical activity. Positive feedback from families indicates that these changes are extending to the home.



### **Testimonials:**

***"The Sugar lesson is my favorite because I know many things in drinks are bad for you and I want to show the world that Starbucks is really bad for you and if you look how much sugar in it it's a lot and the other drinks too."*** - 6th grade student

***"I liked the Tobacco and Vaping lesson. I know a lot of people who partake in tobacco, and I only knew it was bad, but I did not know why really."*** - 8th grade student

***"We understand how important your time and dedication are, as well as your students. We truly do appreciate the knowledge and enthusiasm you all bring each week. Teaching the youth on how to maintain a sound body and sound mind is of the utmost importance."*** - Mr. Babb, 8th grade teacher

***"The topics you covered sparked many vigorous discussions in my homeroom; the students took away a lot and greatly enjoyed this new learning experience."*** - Ms. Molina, 6th grade teacher

# EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

## SERVICE-BASED LEARNING PUBLIC HEALTH FOR COMMUNITY WELLNESS

### ST. JOHNS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

We are thrilled to continue our partnership and collaboration with St. Johns afterschool program, located in South Tucson. As part of the *HPS 497/597E Community Health and Wellness* Course, MEZCOPH students create and disseminate weekly lessons to 45-60 children each Wednesday afternoon. The weekly topics included a lesson in nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional learning through art immersion activities. The St. Johns students greet MEZCOPH students each week with hugs and smiles. The children eat healthy snacks and engage in interactive art activities and physically active games each week with excitement!



### ZFCPHP at Lapan College and Career Club

We are delighted to partner with Lapan College and Career Club (LC3), an organization invested in student success and well-being. Located outside of South Tucson, LC3 provides programs, mentorship, support, and opportunities for scholarship for students from underserved communities, while recognizing the environmental and systemic challenges

that often create barriers to student success. Embodying the belief of its founder, “Nana Pat” Lapan, that education is a pathway to overcoming life’s adversities, LC3’s core mission is to create equitable opportunities for all students to flourish and be successful academically. To date, LC3 has served 10,400 students, and this number continues to grow.

ZFCPHP is proud to promote LC3’s mission through immersive service and collaboration. This fall, ZFCPHP interns and staff volunteered at LC3 programs, including soccer club, art club, pet therapy, and garden club, to learn how students receive support and gain life skills in the after-school environment. Through each program and Cross-Age Peer (CAP) Mentoring, LC3 staff and mentors champion the values of leadership, responsibility, and compassion, encouraging students to reflect and apply their qualities of greatness in their day-to-day lives. We are excited to see how our new partnership evolves through learning, listening, and community-driven development.

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## TRAINING

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### BEHAVIORAL MEASUREMENTS & INTERVENTIONS SHARED RESOURCE (BMISR)

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BMISR has a unique model for staffing its shared resource with a student workforce that provides both an enriching training opportunity and a flexible, cost-effective staffing solution for research studies. From 2023 to the present, the BMISR trained six undergraduate students and 5 graduate students (4 Master’s and 1 PhD) in behavioral interventions and behavioral assessment including diet and physical activity methods and health coaching training.

Mentoring is a priority task for BMISR co-directors Jennifer Bea and Rina Fox and BMISR manager Angela Yung. As a result, one student was accepted into a sports nutrition fellowship and University of Michigan and one student started her post-doc at University of Pittsburgh.

BMISR aims to provide experiences to students that align with their career goals and create a fun team environment. The work is demanding and requires several telephone calls and attention to detail, but the team enjoys quarterly meetings to unwind and connect. This was a picture from last year’s Halloween themed team meeting.

## STUDENT TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES TO PROGRESS UNDERREPRESENTED PROFESSIONALS (STEP-UP) SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM



After a one-year hiatus, the Student Transformative Research Experience to Progress Undergraduate/Graduate Professionals (STEP-UP) in cancer research was back up and running in 2024!

STEP-UP aims to provide hands-on experience in cancer prevention and control (CPC) to upper-level undergraduate and master's level graduate students through a 10-week mentored research program. In 2024, we welcomed nineteen students from five institutions to our initial "STEP-UP 2.0" cohort. We collaborated with these students to prepare them for successful careers in CPC science,

whether they choose bench, bedside, or community as their setting. During their 10-week experience, student trainees were invited to view CPC science through many lenses, including: participation in ongoing research studies through their mentor's lab, weekly practice in literature review, disseminating scientific findings through abstracts and presentations, personal cancer prevention activities, community outreach, and career exploration with UA Cancer Center (UACC) faculty.



Our expectation is that this integrated, innovative, multidisciplinary educational experience in CPC research strengthens self-efficacy, skills retention, and intrinsic motivation to become a CPC scientist. Students provided feedback through our evaluation partnership with BMISR which has been positive and indicates that they found the curriculum and activities to be useful for their lives and future careers! Many students expressed a better understanding of

the process of conducting research and what it means to choose research as a career.

As one student shared:

***"It was very interesting to see all the work that went into a project, learning about the behind the scenes was informative and surprising. So many steps go into research!"***

In the next year, we plan to support more opportunities for mentor training across academic stages, both through our peer-to-peer mentoring program and with our pool of UACC Faculty mentors.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our team continued to provide many online resources for remote learning settings including a reboot of the ZFCPHP website (to be updated 2025). As highlighted in this report, our programs continue to adapt content and resources to engage with those experiencing hardships including economic fluctuation. ZFCPHP Health Educators are committed to supporting our community as we navigate through the ongoing world changes and balancing a new normal in work conditions.

### Wellness & Wonder Health Fair

This wellness and educational expo was sponsored & hosted by the UA Health Sciences. ZFCPHP staff and public health interns participated in this event and shared information on the importance of hydration and healthy beverage choices. We offered infused water and handouts highlighting the benefits of drinking water throughout the day.



## Feast For Your Brain



Sponsored by MEZCOPH, the Precision Aging Network, and MindCrowd; ZFCPHP staff and students participated in this annual event. This health fair promotes cognitive health and healthy living through interactive activities, presentations, and health promotion and how we can “exercise” the brain.



# SUPPORTING NOVEL IDEAS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

## THE CANCER PREVENTION & CONTROL RESEARCH NETWORK (CPCR)

### **20 Years of the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network (CPCR): Past, Present, and Future**

The Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network (CPCR), has published a supplemental issue of *Cancer Causes and Control* to mark the Network’s 20th anniversary. The supplement is separated into five subthemes: (1) Addressing Equity Through CPCR, (2) Capacity Building, (3) Partnership Engagement, (4) Rural Cancer Prevention and Control, and (5) Future Cancer Needs and Priorities. The 21 articles co-written by Network members, partners, and affiliates detail frameworks to address disparities in cancer prevention, strategies to build capacity and engagement across community partners, and considerations on working with medically underserved populations, such as rural and bicultural communities. 118 unique authors contributed to the supplement, with contributions from all eight network centers, affiliate members, CPCR scholars, and federal agency partners.

The supplement was guest-edited by CPRN members, Drs. Prajakta Adsul (University of New Mexico), Cam Escoffery (Emory University), Aaron Seaman (University of Iowa), **Cynthia Thomson (UA)**, and Stephanie Wheeler (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).

Sub-Theme 1: Addressing Equity Through CPRN

From study plans to capacity building: a journey towards health equity in cancer survivorship  
Prajakta Adsul, Jessica D. Austin, Perla Chebli, Emanuelle M. Dias, Rachel Hirschey, Priyanka Ravi, Aaron T. Seaman, **Rosi Vogel**

Sub-Theme 2: Capacity-Building

Mixed methods evaluation of the inaugural year of the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network's (CPCRN) scholars' program  
Cam Escoffery, Courtney N. Petagna, Mary Wangen, Kimberly J. Flicker, Samuel B. Noblet, Mayank Sakhuja, **Cynthia A. Thomson**, Elaine H. Morrato, Swann Adams, Jennifer Leeman & Daniela B. Friedman

Sub-Theme 5: Future Cancer Needs and Priorities

Re-visiting the Call for Translation of Cancer Survivorship Research: Collaborative Multidisciplinary Approaches to Improve Translation and Dissemination  
Betsy Risendal, **Cynthia A. Thomson**, Aaron Seaman, Rachel Hirschey & Linda Overholser

**PUBLICATIONS:**

Farland LV, Lind KE, **Thomson CA**, Saquib N, Shadyab AH, Schnatz PF, Robles-Morales R, Qi L, Strickler H, Lane DS, Murugappan G, Roe DJ, Harris HR. Infertility and risk of postmenopausal breast cancer in the women's health initiative. *Breast Cancer Res Treat.* 2024 Jun;205(3):497-506. doi: 10.1007/s10549-024-07257-2. Epub 2024 Mar 9. PMID: 38459395; PMCID: PMC11186618.

**Thomson CA**, Aragaki AK, Prentice RL, Stefanick ML, Manson JE, Wactawski-Wende J, Watts NB, Van Horn L, Shikany JM, Rohan TE, Lane DS, Wild RA, Robles-Morales R, Shadyab AH, Saquib N, Cauley J. Long-Term Effect of Randomization to Calcium and Vitamin D Supplementation on Health in Older Women: Postintervention Follow-up of a Randomized Clinical Trial. *Ann Intern Med.* 2024 Apr;177(4):428-438. doi: 10.7326/M23-2598. Epub 2024 Mar 12. Erratum in: *Ann Intern Med.* 2024 Sep;177(9):1295. doi: 10.7326/ANNALS-24-01296. Erratum in: *Ann Intern Med.* 2024 Sep;177(9):1294-1295. doi: 10.7326/ANNALS-24-01431. PMID: 38467003.

Werts SJ, Lopez-Pentecost M, Skiba MB, Vogel R, Enriquez T, Garcia L, Ingram M, **Thomson CA**. Conducting Photovoice With Binational Cancer Survivors to Identify Health Behavior Change Intervention Preferences. *Prog Community Health Partnersh.* 2023;17(4):571-582. PMID: 38286772.

The UA joined CPRN in 2019 and received an initial \$1.4 million to advance cancer prevention and control science, with particular focus on the health needs of Hispanic cancer survivors. In 2024, AzCPCRN members attended the CPRN Virtual meeting on January



11th and the 5th Annual CPCRN Spring Meeting in May 15-17, 2024, in Chapel Hill North Carolina

### **RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:**

#### **UA Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network (CPCRN) Understanding Physician's Role on NAFLD-related Disparities**

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is a hepatic disorder ranging from simple steatosis through steatohepatitis to fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). While ample research attributes disparities on NAFLD prevalence to individual-level practices, to date, limited work has focused on the role of physician's consulting behaviors on the diagnosis and management of NAFLD. Primary care providers are less likely than hepatologists to be familiar with the American Association of Clinical Endocrinology (AACE) Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of NAFLD and were more likely to defer to the American Association of Family Practice guideline. Furthermore, previous work has suggested that providers tend to be reluctant to change practice-related habits, which undermines the probability of adopting treatment recommendations included in the AACE clinical guidelines for diagnosis and management of NAFLD. Thus, to understand physicians' experiences diagnosing and managing NAFLD, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with twenty-five board-certified physicians to characterize physicians' current NAFLD consulting behavior, awareness of AACE guidelines, self-efficacy to diagnose and manage patients' NAFLD, and attitudes towards openness to, divergence from, and perceived limitations of the AACE guidelines.

#### **CPCRN/MCHC cervical cancer screening in Hispanic Community-Promotora-based Multicomponent approach for Hispanic women due for Cervical Cancer Screening in Southern Arizona.**

Cervical cancer is a large problem worldwide, especially in the U.S. Hispanic women are hit particularly hard, being more likely to get cervical cancer and die from it compared to white women. In Arizona, Hispanic women face even higher rates of cervical cancer than the national average. This is partly because they do not get screened for the disease as often as they should. The Mariposa Community Health Center, which serves a lot of Hispanic women in Southern Arizona, has found that only 15% of women there are getting screened for cervical cancer, mainly because there are not enough healthcare providers available.

#### **Focus Groups with Hispanic Individuals with Pre-Diabetes and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus to Gain Insights on Colorectal Cancer Screening**

The proposed research will evaluate current knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about colorectal cancer screening and prevention in Hispanic people with pre-diabetes or Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. Individuals diagnosed with pre-diabetes and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus are at higher risk of developing colorectal cancer than the general population.

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## OUR PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENTS

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Public Health students are an integral part of the ZFCPHP, and we strive to create unique academic and training experiences for the next generation of public health professionals. Graduate level students currently working with ZFCPHP include:

- **Adriana Hernandez**, MPH and Doctoral student, Public Health
- **Lauren Erdelyi**, MPH and Doctoral student, Public Health
- **Samantha Werts**, Doctoral student, Public Health
- **Kelli Richardson**, MS student, Nutritional Sciences/Public Health minor

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## HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCES AND KEY PUBLICATIONS

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The ZFCPHP team is committed to providing health and wellness resource information on our website and Facebook page. Center programs and research are highlighted via highlights and individual webpages. Beginning in 2025, we will begin publishing sample lessons from three long-standing wellness programs to engage new community partners and stakeholders, therefore increasing access to health education and expanding our reach

### KEY PUBLICATIONS

**David O. Garcia**, PhD, FACSM, contributed to a publication titled Adherence to a Traditional Mexican Diet Is Associated with Lower Hepatic Steatosis in US-Born Hispanics of Mexican Descent with Overweight or Obesity in the journal *Nutrients*.  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38068856/>

**David O. Garcia**, PhD, FACSM, and **Adriana Maldonado**, PhD, MA, are partnering with El Rio Community Health to create a culturally tailored educational campaign to improve liver disease and cancer health literacy in Mexican-origin communities.

**David O. Garcia**, **Adriana Maldonado**, **Edgar Villavicencio**, **Rosi Vogel**, **Caitlin Baird**, **Ana Gonzalez**, **Estefanía Ochoa Mora**, **Naim Alkhouri**. Use of FibroScan® to assess hepatic steatosis and fibrosis in community-based settings to promote clinical care linkages along the Southern Arizona United States/Mexico border

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- **Website:** <https://zfcphp.arizona.edu/>
  - **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/zfcphp>
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## Thank you Dr. Cynthia Thomson!



Cynthia Thomson, PhD, RDN retired in September 2024, as a Professor and cancer researcher, from MEZCOPH. After a nearly 35-year career, Cyndi has been a true inspiration to her colleagues, staff, and students during her tenure at the UA and the following departments: the UA Cancer Center, Nutritional Sciences and Health Promotion Sciences. Dr. Thomson will continue her research engagement in her Emeritus role at the UA.

Cyndi's career focus has been in cancer prevention & survivorship with over 20 years of lifestyle intervention clinical trials research. Her doctoral degree in nutritional sciences served as the foundation for her translational science career. She enhanced her research programming to include implementation and dissemination of evidenced based information and reaching those under-represented in biomedical research and under-served in cancer survivorship programming. This programming integrates novel interventions including mobile health, behavioral theory, and cancer relevant biomarkers to increase and improve health behaviors. This is just a small sample of her unique research.

We wish Dr. Thomson well in her retirement adventures and are grateful to her for dedication, passion, and exceptional career. She will be deeply missed in the office; however, her legacy will go on through the inspiration of her unique programs and dedication to service. Congratulations on your amazing professional journey!

## FUTURE DIRECTION & END OF YEAR DIRECTOR MESSAGE



**Dr. David O. Garcia**, PhD, MS FACSM. It is a tremendous honor to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Thomson to serve as the Director of the ZFCPHP. As my longtime mentor and colleague, Dr. Thomson has demonstrated that a leader handles themselves with humility and grace while keeping the community at the forefront. Dr. Thomson - thank you so much for all that you have done for the ZFCPHP, the College, and the community. Along with the staff, I am excited to continue carrying out the mission and vision of the center through innovative and impactful programming for our community. We will make you proud!