



Speaker Biographies

IAFNS-ACNC Webinar Series

May 2022

IAFNS ACNC Webinar Series

May 17, 23, and 26

10:00 – 11:30 am ET

May 17

Dr. Mario Ferruzzi

Introduction to and overview of the Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center

Dr. Elisabet Børsheim

Obesity, fitness and cardiometabolic health in children

Dr. Craig Porter

Development and optimization of rodent models to study metabolic health across the lifespan

May 23

Dr. Linda Larson-Prior

The impact of feeding behaviors on cognitive development in children

Dr. Xawei Ou

Diet, activity, and body weight status: Impacts on the developing brain

Dr. Laxmi Yeruva

Milk, microbes, and metabolism: Lessons learned from animal model

May 26

Dr. Aline Andres

Prenatal and postnatal programming of health

Dr. Taren Swindle

Implementation science to improve diet and physical activity in early life

Mario Ferruzzi



Dr. Mario Ferruzzi is a Professor and Chief of the Section of Developmental Nutrition in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. He received his B.S. (1996) in Chemistry from Duke University and Ph.D. (2001) in Food Science and Nutrition from The Ohio State University. Dr. Ferruzzi joined the Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center as the Director in 2021 having previously served on as a David H. Murdock Distinguished Professor at North Carolina State University's Plants for Human Health Institute (2016-2021) and as a Professor of Food Science and Nutrition Science at Purdue University (2004-2016). Dr. Ferruzzi's research interest are at the interface of agriculture, food, and nutrition sciences in the study of micronutrient and phytochemical bioavailability, metabolism, and impact to human health. He has a particular interest in strategies that can be leveraged to improve the nutritional and functional quality of food products for at risk populations.

Elisabet Børsheim



Dr. Elisabet Børsheim is a Professor in both the Department of Pediatrics and Department of Geriatrics at UAMS, serves as the Director of the ACNC Physical Activity Core Laboratory and leads the Physical Activity, Energetics and Metabolism Research Lab. She has a B.Sc. in Sports Sciences and a Ph.D. in Exercise Physiology from the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, and also a B.Sc. in Natural Sciences and a M.Sc. in Physiology from the University of Oslo, Norway. Before coming to Little Rock in 2013, she was the Metabolism Unit Director at Shriners Hospitals for Children – Galveston, and Associate Professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch. Her research interests are in the regulation of metabolic processes, specifically related to muscle protein, regional fat, and energy metabolism, and how physical activity affects health and development throughout the lifespan.

Craig Porter



Dr. Craig Porter is an Associate Professor within the Department of Pediatrics at UAMS, and serves as the Associate Director of the Physical Activity Core Laboratory and leads the Physical Activity, Energetics and Metabolism Research Laboratory at Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center. He is also a researcher within the NIH-funded Center for Childhood Obesity Prevention at Arkansas Children's Research Institute. He received an undergraduate degree in Physiology, Sports Science and Nutrition from the University of Glasgow – Scotland, followed by a PhD in skeletal muscle physiology from the University of Nottingham, England. Prior to coming to ACRI, Dr. Porter was an Associate Professor within the Department of Surgery at the University of Texas Medical Branch – Galveston and directed the Metabolism Unit at Shriners Hospitals for Children – Galveston.

Linda Larson-Prior



Dr. Linda Larson-Prior is the Director of the Neurocognitive Dynamics Laboratory at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and the ACNC Director of the Brain Function Laboratory. The research focus of the Brain Function Laboratory is on cognitive development and function in children. This focus is expanded in the Neurocognitive Development Laboratory to included adults. Our research projects address the impact of environmental conditions; specifically, nutritional status, weight status and sleep, on cognitive function across the lifespan. Each of these environmental factors has an effect on cognitive function that may adversely impact school and work performance if disregulated in childhood. To better understand the impact of these environmental factors on brain function, we employ neuroimaging, behavioral and neuropsychological methods and a multi-disciplinary researcher team.

Xiawei Ou



Dr. Xiawei Ou received his doctoral degree from Vanderbilt University in 2007 with a concentration in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). He continued his research at Vanderbilt University Institute of Imaging Science as a research fellow before he joined Arkansas Children's Hospital and became a faculty member of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Dr. Ou's past research includes the development of new quantitative MRI methods and their application on small animal imaging. His current research focuses on developing and using advanced pediatric neuroimaging methods to evaluate the effects of nutrition/obesity/environmental factors on early brain development in infants and young children.

Laxmi Yeruva



Dr. Laxmi Yeruva is a Research Leader-USDA-ARS at the Arkansas Childrens Nutrition Center and Adjunct Associate Professor, UAMS. She is an experienced Associate Professor with a demonstrated history of working in the hospital and health care industry. She studies the role of small RNAs and extracellular vesicles in inflammation and immune response using chlamydia infection models and clinical studies. Also, the role of neonatal diet and mechanisms behind positive health outcomes of breastfeeding are being studied. The goal is to determine the role of human milk components and microbiota on children health and immune function.

Aline Andres



Dr. Aline Andres is a Registered Dietitian and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and at Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center. Dr. Andres has a Bachelor of Sciences in Agriculture; a Master of Sciences in Nutrition; and a PhD in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on examining the effects of prenatal and postnatal nutrition on anthropometrics, body composition, metabolism and physical activity of infants and children.

Taren Swindle



Dr. Taren M. Swindle is an Associate Professor in Family and Preventive Medicine within the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Broadly, her research program focuses on understanding and improving health and developmental outcomes for children impacted by poverty. Dr. Swindle has a particular focus on obesity prevention and nutrition promotion for young children in low-income families. Her work to date has focused on the early childcare setting as a key context for obesity prevention and nutrition intervention. She is interested in increasing adoption of evidence-based practices and interventions in community settings such as this through application of Implementation Science. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Research from the University of Memphis.