



CHPDP Interim Director Receives Faculty Scholar Award

An extensive literature on health and social relationships suggests that social ties are salutary. Marriage in particular has been found to be health-protective across a wide range of conditions and outcomes, but relationship *quality* matters. Greater marital satisfaction, for example, has been associated with better self-reported health and more adaptive health behaviors. Chronic relationship discord, in contrast, has been associated with cardiovascular and immune dysregulation.

Drs. Shelby Langer (CHPDP) and Rosa Krajmalnik-Brown (ASU School of Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment) received an Edson College Center for Innovation in Healthy and Resilient Aging Faculty Scholar Award to support a project titled, “Relationship functioning and gut microbiota composition among older adult couples: a pilot study to assess feasibility of recruitment and data collection.” This study will extend the extant literature on relationships and physical health to gut health among older adults in particular. The aging population is important to study given links between social isolation and physical health decrements in older age, and age-related changes in the gut microbiota associated with inflammation and immune decline. Aims are to test feasibility of recruitment and data collection among 30 older adult spouse pairs and to examine intra- and inter-personal associations between indicators of relationship functioning (relationship satisfaction, communication, intimacy) and gut microbiota composition and diversity. Findings will inform a larger grant application to identify mechanisms by which relationship factors and the gut microbiome are linked, potentially identifying targets for intervention testing. Other team members include Drs. Helene Labonte and John DiBaise of Mayo Clinic, and Drs. Michael Todd and Aaron Guest of Edson College. Congrats to this multidisciplinary team!