



אוניברסיטת חיפה
University of Haifa
جامعة حيفا

New

HEIGHTS

UNIVERSITY OF
HAIFA MAGAZINE
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FEATURE

FROM THE WORLD
OF HIGH-TECH TO
HIGHER EDUCATION:

MEET MOOLY EDEN
NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

p10

on the

FRONT LINE *of* HUMAN CARE

FUTURE FACULTY OF
SOCIAL WELFARE
AND HEALTH
SCIENCES BUILDING

p4



8 WAYS

the University of Haifa's
Faculty of Social Welfare &
Health Sciences is Improving
Quality of Life in Israel and Beyond



1

CLINICAL OUTREACH:
Providing interdisciplinary healthcare
services for Israel's northern region

The Interdisciplinary Clinical Center (ICC) is a unique healthcare facility that integrates innovative research, teaching, training and clinical services to address Israel's increasingly acute social and healthcare challenges.

Under the direction of Prof. Rivka Yahav, the ICC offers diverse therapeutic and diagnostic services under one roof addressing the health, developmental, emotional and social needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations with limited access to high-quality healthcare. Services are offered in Hebrew, English, Russian, and Arabic by a diverse professional staff comprised of communication clinicians, occupational therapists, clinical and educational psychologists, psychotherapists and group therapists, social workers,

art and movement therapists, physiotherapists, and experts in health and nutrition. Workshops for new and expecting parents are also offered, as well as early childhood development programs and community intervention projects. The ICC is home to four innovative research institutes specializing in areas related to emotional stress, communication disorders, hearing impairments and developmental delays and disorders, and offers a wide-range of community-oriented projects to address needs not being met by existing services. Among them is the Developmental Identification and Accompaniment Project, a first of a kind program in Israel, which aims to identify preschool children with language, sensory-motor, emotional, and social difficulties in need of therapeutic intervention.



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Our Faculty brings together the complementary fields of the social sciences, health sciences and public health. Our multidisciplinary programming blends theoretical studies with intensive fieldwork emphasizing practical research to improve the wellbeing of patients and their families.

-**Prof. Faisal Azaiza**, Dean of the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences
Former Head of the School of Social Work and widely published scholar in education, citizenship and social justice.



2

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES: Rehabilitative technologies employ virtual reality to improve the quality of life

The Laboratory for Innovations in Rehabilitative Technology, headed by Prof. Tamar Weiss of the Department of Occupational Therapy, develops and evaluates novel technologies to improve patient care and quality of life for people in need of short- and long-term rehabilitation. Shopping simulations for stroke patients, personalization of virtual games for children with cerebral palsy and video modeling for children with autism are a few examples of innovative assistive devices produced at the Lab.

As part of the Israeli Center of Research Excellence on Learning In a NetworKed Society (LINKS I-CORE), Prof. Weiss and colleagues at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya developed an innovative data spoon to assess self-feeding difficulties of very young children. She is also part of a joint research program, involving scientists from the University of Haifa and the Bruno Kessler Foundation in Italy, exploring ways in which collaborative technologies can support shared interactions between people in conflict.

3

TRAILBLAZING STUDIES

A joint research study between the University of Haifa and Al-Quds Open University in Jerusalem is exploring perceptions and coping mechanisms of Arab women living with breast cancer in Israel and the West Bank.

The study follows two groups of women whose way of life has been influenced differently by 'Western' culture, to compare traditional and modern cognitive-behavioral coping mechanisms in handling the disease. The researchers hope that these comparisons will lead to a better understanding of the psychosocial needs of cancer patients and their families. The study, led by Professors Faisal Azaiza and Miri Cohen, and Dr. Hadass Goldblatt of the School of Social Work, has recently completed its data collection phase. The Middle East Regional Cooperation Program (MERC) is providing funding for the project.

4

LEADING NATIONAL HEALTH CAMPAIGNS

Researchers from the University of Haifa have joined forces in international efforts aimed at promoting healthy eating and lifestyle among teens.

The campaign, known as the "5-2-1-0 Numbers to Live By," endorses an easy to remember rule for healthy living: 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables, 2 hours or less of recreational screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity and 0 sugar sweetened beverages a day. "Beyond raising awareness, we hope our research will point to innovative and effective ways that will motivate teens to adopt healthy lifestyle choices," explains Dr. Shira Zelber-Sagi, a nutrition researcher from the School of Public Health. Dr. Zelber-Sagi is collaborating with biomedical informatics researcher Prof. Mor Peleg from the Department of Information Systems and Prof. Doron Kliger of the Department of Economics, who specializes in finance and behavioral economics, on this national wellness project. The trio are developing a social app that will enable users to monitor their healthy eating practices and progress by providing feedback and incentives to motivate good choices. The app is based on insights gained from research into nutrition and behavioral economics.



ABOUT THE FACULTY

The Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences was established over two decades ago in response to the pressing need for professionalization of the allied health disciplines to serve the outlying communities of northern Israel. Today, it is renowned for its wide range of research in health and social welfare and innovative professional advancement programs that are setting the gold standard of practice in fields of physical and occupational therapy, psychotherapy, mental health, communication disorders and nutrition.

5

NEW NATIONAL HUB For health and risk communication



The University recently marked the launch of the Health and Risk Communication Research Center – the only center of its kind in Israel.

Headed by Dr. Anat Gesser-Edelsburg from the School of Public Health, the Center advances interdisciplinary research, theory and practice in health and risk communication in order to improve communications of health risk information to diverse audiences. Scientists from diverse backgrounds and disciplines have joined the effort – ranging from experts in epidemiology, nutritional behavior, through environmental and occupational health, to emergency preparedness, and social marketing. The Center is participating in ASSET, a four-year international research project

funded by the European Commission to design and test integrated transdisciplinary strategies for communicating scientifically based messages to targeted audiences during crises such as disease outbreaks and epidemics. The project combines public health, vaccine and epidemiological research, social and political sciences, law and ethics, gender studies, science communication and media.



ASSET

Action plan on Science in Society related issues in Epidemics and Total pandemics

6

CUTTING-EDGE LABORATORIES: Developing a profound understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of pain

Researchers at the Human Experimental Pain Research Laboratory in The Cheryl Spencer Department of Nursing are advancing the understanding of the complex phenomena of pain by utilizing experimental models based on psychophysical techniques.

Studies at the lab, headed by Prof. Dorit Pud, help bridge the gap between animal and clinical research to quantify and better understand the perception and modulation of pain and its underlying mechanisms. Scientists at the facility investigate topics such as individual differences in pain perception, personality traits and genetic factors affecting sensitivity to pain, variation in analgesic response (measuring effectiveness of painkillers), and paradoxical phenomena of opioid induced hyperalgesia, the condition of heightened pain sensitivity to analgesics.

NEW BUILDING PROJECT

The new 57,000 square foot Social Welfare and Health Sciences building under construction will house under one roof state-of-the-art research and teaching facilities for the University's fastest growing Faculty, which has an enrollment of more than 4,500 students and is staffed by some 300 faculty members.

Seed funding for the construction of the new building has been made possible by generous gifts provided by Maurice Kanbar and Aaron Spencer.

Additional support is needed to help complete the building project. For more information please contact the Office of the Vice President for External Affairs and Resource Development.



Rendering of the future Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences Building

SCHOOLS

- / School of Social Work
- / School of Public Health
- / Graduate School of Creative Art Therapies

DEPARTMENTS

- / The Cheryl Spencer Department of Nursing
- / Gerontology
- / Physical Therapy
- / Occupational Therapy

- / Community Mental Health
- / Communication Sciences and Disorders
- / Human Services

INTERDISCIPLINARY CLINICAL CENTER

DEPARTMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

7

SPEARHEADING NATIONAL INITIATIVES: Evaluating psychiatric rehabilitation services across Israel



Mental health is a growing global concern. According to the World Health Organization, mental illnesses account for over 15% of the international health burden. Developing and delivering effective services has become a renewed healthcare priority as governments increasingly recognize the need to help individuals and families affected by mental disorders.

The Center for Community Mental Health Research is leading an ambitious project to assess the impact and effectiveness of psychiatric rehabilitation services in Israel. Launched in collaboration with the Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation and the Israeli Ministry of Health, the National Outcome Rehabilitation Monitoring Implementation and Research Project is providing decision-makers with data-informed policy recommendations for improved clinical care.

Prof. David Roe, founding director of the Center, is leading the groundbreaking project. “Our initial findings emphasize the significance of the individuals’ subjective experiences. Individuals who reported higher quality of life and better functioning were significantly less likely to be re-hospitalized up to one year later,” notes Prof. Roe. “We have also learned that the process of joint goal-setting between clients and practitioners play an important role in their successful recovery.”

Scientific publications based on the project’s findings have attracted international attention. Prof. Roe has presented the project’s model and findings at mental health conferences in Denmark and Norway, and recently at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

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GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH: Scientific evidence to demonstrate that “excessive daydreaming” is a distinct psychological phenomenon

‘Maladaptive daydreaming’ (MD) is a unique condition first coined in 2002 by Dr. Eli Somer, a Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Haifa. A new series of studies showing that MD can be validly and reliably diagnosed suggest it can be established as a new and distinct mental disorder.

Patients describe the psychological condition, characterized as intense daydreaming, as a painful addiction that impacts their ability to lead independent lives. Some describe difficulty in sustaining attention

and concentration, while others report hardships in leading stable relationships or holding down full-time employment. Findings from a recent series of studies by an international team of researchers led by Somer show that MD can be validly and reliably diagnosed. “With evidence-based research affirming it as a valid disorder, accurate diagnosis of MD is now possible,” explains Prof. Somer of the School of Social Work. To this end, Somer is currently conducting a study he hopes will lead to the development of a treatment to alleviate the dysfunction associated with this condition.

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL HEALTH EXPERTS

The International MPH in Health Systems Policy and Administration provides students with a strong foundation of the complex and rapidly changing global health landscape, preparing future practitioners and researchers for leadership roles in settings across the globe. According to the Directors of the MPH program, Prof. Manfred Green and Prof. Richard Schuster of the School of Public Health, this year the program opened its second cohort, which has attracted 16 students from Africa, North and South America, Europe and Israel.

globalhealthleadership.haifa.ac.il



(l-r) Co-Directors Prof. Manfred Green and Prof. Richard Schuster with graduating students at last year’s commencement ceremony.