

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Prevention Health Fair held at USU with Top Researchers from CEHS

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Health fair attendees review documents with graduate student researchers.

On Saturday, June 29, the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center (ADRC), a state-funded center housed within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services (CEHS), hosted a health fair focused on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia awareness and prevention. The fair was held in collaboration with USU faculty with expertise in psychology, aging, neuroscience, and more. More than 100 Northern Utah residents over the age of 55, as well as their caregivers, attended the event.

The health fair was held in the USU Taggart Student Center, with some attendees choosing to participate in a one-day research study—Prevent Alzheimer's For Life (PALS)—conducted by a team of USU researchers, with JoAnn Tschanz, endowed chair of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, professor of psychology, and coordinator of the Alzheimer's Prevention Health Fair, leading the research as principal investigator.

Tschanz said about the event, "It is important for people to understand what they can do now to reduce their risk of Alzheimer's Disease and to enhance their physical, cognitive, and emotional wellbeing. This fair was a wonderful opportunity for individuals to learn more about enhancing their overall wellbeing and discovering simple ways to mitigate cognitive decline."

The PALS research team included USU faculty members David Bolton, associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences; Christopher Warren, assistant professor of neuroscience; Heidi Wengreen, department head and professor of the Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences Department; Jon Carey, lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences; Maria Kleinstaeuber, assistant professor in the Department of Psychology; Naveen Nagaraj, assistant professor in the Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education; and Yin Liu, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

"As a faculty member, it is really fun to be part of an event like this. It's a win for everyone," says Jon Carey, lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences. "From my perspective, the health fair was a fantastic opportunity for our undergraduate students to gain hands-on testing experience with an aging population group, while also collecting research data."

In recent years, leading researchers around the world have begun focusing on Alzheimer's Disease risk factors that the average person can impact with sometimes minor modifications to their daily lives. The interventions target diet, physical and social activity, cognitively stimulating activities, and other lifestyle choices. Results of such research show a marked improvement in participants' cognitive test scores.

Terri Grant, a resident of Arizona who spent the summer with her husband Glenn in Cache Valley for the annual Summer Citizens program, attended the event. "We consider ourselves to be well read and educated, but we learned so much from the Health Fair at USU. The most important thing is the urgency of early diagnosis when there are cognitive concerns," Terri said. "I've been concerned about my husband's cognitive health for a while and after this educational experience, I called our doctors in Arizona. We were told we had to wait four to six months for an appointment, but I advocated for an earlier one. Now we have an appointment scheduled for the day after we get home to begin the diagnostic process."