

New Column! ATPM Member Spotlight



The Tibet Supplements and Micronutrients in Pregnancy Assessment project team.

We are pleased to announce a new column – **ATPM Member Spotlight!** Beginning with this issue, the ATPM/CDC Research Funding Program will highlight one of its many exciting research projects that is making considerable progress and achievement in the prevention research field. The ATPM Member Spotlight will highlight a member every issue. The next issue will feature a highlight from the Career Development and Training Program. As a result of this new section, we hope to convey the importance of public health prevention and recognize those professionals who are making significant gains in the field.

If you are currently a Subawardee and would like to see your work highlighted in future editions, please contact Alisen James at ajames@atpm.org.

“Tibet Supplements and Micronutrients Pregnancy Assessment (TSAMPA) Project Tibet”

Timothy Dye, PhD is based at the University of Rochester, Division of Public Health and is currently in year one of the two year program. The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is funding his project entitled, “Tibet Supplements and Micronutrients in Pregnancy Assessment (TSAMPA) Project Tibet”.

Maternal and perinatal mortality rates in rural Tibet are among the highest in the world. Micronutrient deficiency, especially Vitamin A and Iron, are endemic in rural villages of Tibet and supplementation during pregnancy is rare. Diet is severely limited in rural Tibet and does not provide sufficient micronutrient content for pregnant women or their children. Micronutrient deficiency during pregnancy, particularly Vitamin A and Iron, have been associated with increased risk of maternal death, particularly from hemorrhage. “TSAMPA Project Tibet” is a community-based health promotion project that aims to decrease micronutrient deficiency through enhanced supplementation and dietary diversity among pregnant women and their communities in Tibet. The acronym TSAMPA is also the name of the most common food consumed among Tibetans. Tsampa is a barley-based product and, along with butter tea (a tea made with yak butter and salt) comprises the staples of rural Tibet diets.

“TSAMPA Project Tibet” focuses its work in Medrogongar County on the Tibetan Plateau, where the



Health workers from the Mamba Township examine surveys as part of a training session.

average altitude is over 4000 meters (12,000 feet) with steep, jagged mountains. The climate is arid, cold, and windy with intense sunshine. Roughly 41,000 Tibetans live in Medrogongar County – a remote county 80-250 km east of Lhasa. The area is populated by nomadic and farming communities

and it is one of the most underdeveloped and poorest regions in China. Medrogongar County has the highest maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality rates in the Lhasa Prefecture. The townships have basic health facilities (Xiang clinics) that offer no maternal and newborn healthcare and very limited access to prenatal, neonatal, and newborn care with no emergency OB/GYN services.

The goals of the TSAMPA project include:

1. To improve effective practice of rural health providers

(midwives, village doctors, health workers) regarding micronutrient supplementation provision to pregnant women.

2. To increase effective use of prenatal supplements among pregnant women through improved micronutrient health literacy and practice.

3. To identify sustainable and acceptable methods for micronutrient-rich food procurement and preparation.

To work toward these goals, the project integrates novel training methods, qualitative fieldwork regarding community food procurement and household dietary habits, and quantitative assessment of knowledge, attitudes, and practices around nutrition in pregnancy. The project team includes anthropologists, epidemiologists, and health practitioners with extensive experience working with women and children in global settings. Collaborators on this project include *One HEART* (“Health Education and Research in Tibet”), a non-governmental organization based in Lhasa, Tibet and Salt Lake City, Utah, the Lhasa Prefecture Health Bureau (Tibetan Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of

University of Alabama). In addition, Principal Investigator Dr. Dye (University of Rochester) and two Rochester-based MPH students Ty Dickerson and Theresa Murray conducted qualitative fieldwork in remote rural communities and hospitals. The Lhasa-based project team includes three full-time Tibetan staff led by a project manager (Soliman) with extensive experience with non-governmental agencies in Tibet. The project team is assisted by Research Assistant Norbu, who has summited Mount Everest and is currently a field worker for TSAMPA.

This summer the project team including project physician Bernhard Fassl, MD and Nutritional Epidemiologist Diana Fernandez, MD, MPH, PhD will conduct additional training and fieldwork in the four-town project area in rural Tibet. In addition, the team will continue to explore novel approaches to assist rural Tibetans in producing and obtaining sufficient micronutrient-rich food to help reduce preventable disease in women and children. The team is guided by a Lhasa-based Advisory Group and also two Project Advisors from Cornell University, Sienna Craig, BA, MA and Gretel Peltó, PhD.

For more information about this project, please contact Timothy Dye, PhD Principal Investigator, at tim_dye@urmc.rochester.edu.



Micronutritional training session for health workers.

China), and the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Division of Geographic Medicine.

The project team recently completed a field visit that included hosting a training course for community workers around micronutrition concepts and practice organized by co-investigators Arlene Samen, RN, CFNP, PA (OneHEART) and Sibylle Kristensen, BS, MSPH, MPH

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