

Third Presentation of the Judy K. Black Early Career Research Award

by

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It is my pleasure this morning to introduce the third person to be recognized by the American Academy of Health Behavior as a recipient of the Judy K. Black Early Career Research Award. This award honors the memory of the wife of one of The Academy's founders and past presidents, Dr. David R. "Randy" Black. Judy Black died tragically in a traffic accident a little more than six years ago. The award that commemorates her life recognizes early-career health behavior research that is innovative and rigorous and that makes an important contribution to science or practice. To be eligible for award consideration individuals must:

- Be considered early in career, i.e., <5years postdoctoral or other terminal degree (doctoral degree not required) as of December 15th of the year in which the submission is made.
- Submit an abstract that clearly reflects data-based, meta-analytic, or theory development research related to health behavior that is adjudicated as part of the conference abstract solicitation process.
- Be the lead author on the study submitted as part of the abstract process for award consideration, though not necessarily the sole author.
- Provide a full paper, complete with any relevant tables, figures, and references, at the time of the abstract submission.

In her professional life, Judy K. Black was a speech and language pathologist. As a teacher, she worked with children and youth from elementary school through the university level. She was known widely as someone who took pride in helping people to reach their highest

potential. It is appropriate for The Academy to have named an award in her honor as her life and her memory personify the achievement and ideals for which The Academy stands.

Selecting the Judy K. Black Early Career Research Award recipient follows a multistep refereed process involving a panel of judges that includes officers and fellows of The Academy. Papers are reviewed blindly with only code numbers assigned to them. No one associated directly with the applicant or the applicant's institution participates in the review process. Each paper is scored in four categories: significance, innovativeness, methodological rigor, and contribution to health behavior research or potential for application in practice.

The 2009 award recipient's paper is entitled "The Role of School Physical Activity Programs in Child Obesity Trajectory." It was a featured presentation of last night's poster presentations (Sunday, March 8, 2009). I am privileged to introduce to you a person who is just the third to be honored with this award, Ms. Meenakshi "Meena" Fernandes of the Frederick S. Pardee RAND Graduate School.

Ms. Fernandes has been an assistant analyst with the Congressional Budget Office and a summer intern at the World Bank, both in Washington DC, and a research assistant with the Center for Population Economics in Chicago. In 2003, she received her BA in economics, with honors, from the University of Chicago. As an undergraduate student, she received a FLAG Grant to study German at the Goethe Institute in Munich. Her baccalaureate thesis was entitled "The Convergence of Tuberculosis Mortality in the United States." In 2007, she received an M.Phil degree from the RAND Graduate School. Today, her interests are broadly related to the environmental determinants of population health as she pursues PhD studies. At RAND, her work has focused on school nutrition and physical activity policies in relation to childhood obesity. As a senior author, Meena has three peer-reviewed papers published or accepted for

publication in the scholarly literature, with several others in progress. Presently, she continues her work as an assistant policy analyst with the Health and Labor & Population Units of RAND Corporation.

Finally, it should be noted that Meena's talents are not focused solely on academic pursuits. Since the age of six, she has played the violin and today specializes in what she describes as "old-time fiddle." By now, it should be evident that Meena Fernandes has a style that is all her own. The Academy can take great pride in having selected her as the recipient of the Judy K. Black Early Career Research Award, and in presenting it to her today. Again, it is my honor to introduce her to all of you.