

Renowned Researcher in Alzheimer's Disease, JoAnn Tschanz, to Host Alzheimer's Prevention Health Fair at USU

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Research shows that Alzheimer's Disease risk factors can be reduced with sometimes minor modifications to daily life.

On Saturday, June 29, clinical neuropsychologist and USU professor of psychology JoAnn Tschanz will join other USU faculty with expertise in psychology, aging, neuroscience, and more, in hosting a health fair for Northern Utah residents. The fair is focused on Alzheimer's Disease awareness and prevention. Residents over the age of 55 as well as caregivers are encouraged to attend.

Tschanz, who is well-known throughout the community for her long-time research efforts with the Cache County Study on Memory and Aging (CCSMA), also serves as coordinator of the Alzheimer's Prevention Health Fair. "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," she says. "This fair is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about enhancing our overall wellbeing and discovering simple ways to mitigate cognitive decline."

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 significant improvement in participants' cognitive test scores.

The problem, however, is that very few people can participate in these studies. Tschanz sees the upcoming health fair as one way to overcome that limitation. "We decided to take the same strategy of targeting multiple domains, but we expanded it to a health fair setting to provide information to a much broader population," explains Tschanz. The event promises to provide a wealth of useful information related to lifestyle, diet, and overall wellbeing.



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Fair attendees are also invited to participate in a one-day research study—Prevent Alzheimer's For Life (PALS)—conducted by a team of USU researchers, with Tschanz as principal investigator.

Beth Fauth, director of the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center (ADRC), a state-funded center housed in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, explains the ADRC's priority in making the research study accessible to the community. "These types of community-based educational opportunities about dementia risk, and the opportunity for people to get involved in research if they wish, are part of the mission of USU's ADRC," she says. "We don't want to do research about Alzheimer's Disease prevention without passing along what we have learned to the community."

The research team includes 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 in 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. Each member of the team is an expert in one or more of the modifiable risk factors and will interact directly with attendees and study participants at the health fair.

In addition to completing questionnaires about diet, general health history, and overall physical activity levels, study participants will receive a cognition test, hearing screening, carotenoid scan, and a timed walking test. They will also have assessments on grip strength, balance and coordination, stress levels, and sleep patterns. Other booths at the fair will provide information on relaxation techniques, managing chronic pain, and improving sleep. Attendees will also learn about the Blue Zone principles, which examine the connection between lifestyle, environment, and longevity.

"Although these activities are targeted to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's Disease, they are also relevant for healthy living and successful aging," says Tschanz. "People should understand that it's never too late to start improving their physical and cognitive wellbeing."

In addition to the assessment and information booths, JoAnn Tschanz will speak on dementia, ways to optimize cognitive functioning, and the latest Alzheimer's treatments, including the new FDA-approved medication Lecanemab. James Richardson, MD, professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Michigan, will share his expertise on the essential components of balance, particularly on cognition and its associated fall risk.

Also, Emily Perry, yoga instructor in the Kinesiology and Health Science Department, and Melissa Jacobson, yoga and mindfulness coach based in Cache Valley, will facilitate chair yoga, an effective, low-impact yoga method popular among older adults.

Community resources at the fair will include the Utah Assistive Technology Program (UATP), a program of USU's Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice, which provides assistance technology for individuals; the ADRC, which is a USU-based resource center offering support to dementia patients and their caregivers; the Utah chapter of the Alzheimer's Association; and the Logan Library, which is partnering with the ADRC to create dementia kits that will be available on-loan from the library. "We want to give back to the Cache Valley community, which has always been so supportive of our age-related research. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn about some of the risk factors of Alzheimer's Disease and prevention," says Tschanz.

The health fair will be held on the second floor of the USU Taggart Student Center from 10 AM to 2 PM on Saturday, June 29. Research participants should expect to spend between one and two hours at the fair, depending on their interests. A small \$20 honorarium will be provided to all participants who complete the research study. Attendees may park free of charge at the Big Blue Parking Terrace. For more information, visit the [ADRC's](#) website.