



## Food Forum Webinar

### Optimizing Health with Age: What is Nutrition's Role?

Speaker and Moderator Biographical Sketches



#### **Ucheoma Akobundu, Ph.D., M.S.**

*Meals on Wheels America*

#### **Speaker**

Uche Akobundu serves as the senior director, nutrition, at Meals on Wheels America where she leads the development and implementation of the association's strategy for senior nutrition programs and services. This work includes the design and execution of projects that demonstrate the evidence base for senior nutrition programs, as well as leading varied grant, education, and training initiatives that strengthen and contemporize the portfolio of local service offerings in specific regions as well as across the country. Dr. Akobundu specializes in geriatric nutrition and community-based nutrition and aging service delivery. She holds an M.S. in nutrition with a concentration in public health from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and a Ph.D. in nutrition from the University of Maryland, College Park.



#### **Sarah Booth, Ph.D.**

*Tufts University*

#### **Speaker**

Sarah Booth is director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University (HNRCA), a senior scientist, and leads research projects focused on diet and the aging brain and sensory systems. The mission of the HNRCA, one of the largest research centers in the world studying nutrition and its relationship to healthy aging and physical activity, is to promote healthy and active aging based on research focused on nutrition and physical activity choices that encourage vitality. It is one of six human nutrition research centers supported by the United States Department of Agriculture and one of six Clinical Centers supporting the NIH's Nutrition for Precision Health initiative. Dr. Booth is a professor in the Biochemical and Molecular Nutrition Program at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. She is also current president for the American Society of Nutrition and chair of the 2025 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans Advisory Committee. Dr. Booth is also an international leader in vitamin K research. She and her team recently were the first to examine Vitamin D levels in the brain and discovered that low levels of vitamins D and K are associated with cognitive decline. She developed the methodology for measuring vitamin K forms in a variety of food matrices and her research team continues to generate vitamin K food composition data that are incorporated into national nutrient databases. Dr. Booth has received multiple awards in recognition of her research, the most recent being the American Society of Nutrition (ASN) E.V. McCollum Award for a senior investigator. She received her Ph.D. from McGill University, Canada.



**Anna Thalacker-Mercer, Ph.D.**

*University of Alabama at Birmingham*

**Speaker**

Anna Thalacker-Mercer is University of Alabama Health Services Foundation (UAHSF) Endowed Professor of Regenerative and Translational Medicine, associate professor, and vice chair of training programs and mentorship in the Department of Cell, Developmental, and Integrative Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Additionally, she serves as the associate director of the UAB Center for Exercise Medicine and co-leader of the UAB Nathan Shock Center, Research Development Core. Dr. Thalacker-Mercer developed a strong foundation in age-related changes in nutrient metabolism and skeletal muscle physiology. She continued her research training as a Postdoctoral Fellow at UAB in the NIH funded Nutrition Obesity Research Center, the Center for Aging Translational Research Program, and the Center for Exercise Medicine. The overarching objective of her research program is to identify and understand nutrient and metabolic requirements (i) for maintenance of skeletal muscle homeostasis with advancing age and disease and (ii) for skeletal muscle regeneration following traumatic injury. Findings from her research have far-reaching impact for several populations that face skeletal muscle deterioration and declining quality-of-life. Dr. Thalacker-Mercer received her Ph.D. at Purdue University.



**Kristen Reimers, Ph.D., RDN**

*Conagra Brands*

**Moderator**

Kristin Reimers is Nutrition and Health Research Fellow at Conagra Brands, where she leads the Nutrition team to execute the enterprise's nutrition strategy that promotes sustainable nutrition, drives nutrition-focused food design, enables health attribute communication, and collaborates to improve access to healthier foods. During her time at Conagra, Dr. Reimers has led numerous clinical nutrition research and communication initiatives, all aimed at enabling consumers to lead healthier lives with convenient, healthy foods. Prior to joining Conagra, Dr. Reimers was Director of Programs at The Center for Human Nutrition, Omaha, NE, where she conducted nutrition research and developed programs in the areas of obesity, aging, hydration, and sports nutrition. Dr. Reimers' publications include over 50 chapters, abstracts, continuing education units and journal articles. She holds professional memberships in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the American Society for Nutrition and is a member of the Institute for the Advancement of Food and Nutrition (IAFNS). Dr. Reimers received her master's and doctoral degrees in human nutrition from the University of Nebraska.



**Paul Shiels, Ph.D.**  
*University of Glasgow*  
**Speaker**

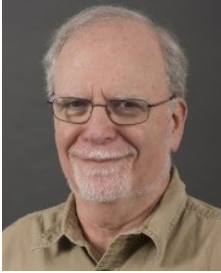
Paul Shiels is Professor of Geroscience at the University of Glasgow, where he is founder of the Glasgow Geroscience Group. He has over 200 publications (including in *Nature*, *Cell*, *Nature Genetics* and *Nature Neuroscience*) and generated 10 Patents in this field. Dr. Shiels has pioneered the concept of the exposome of ageing and was subsequently the first to describe links between socioeconomic position, epigenetics, the microbiome and ageing. His current research portfolio comprises investigation of the exposome of ageing, novel senotherapies and development of biomarkers of ageing, including epigenetic clocks. He has recently developed a clinically accurate epigenetic clock for normative ageing. Dr. Shiels holds the honour of being Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the British Society for Research on Ageing, the world's oldest charitable society for research on ageing. He has acted as an expert on the Biology of Ageing on several national policies advising consortia, including providing evidence to UK XIRA and the UK Government All Party Parliamentary Group on Longevity. Dr. Shiels is Chair of the FWO (Belgium) Med 6 Fellowship Funding Panel and is a panel member for the UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF). He sits on the Editorial Advisory Board for *Aging Cell*. Dr. Shiels has acted as CSO for Pathfinder Cell Therapy PLC and has sat on the Scientific Advisory Boards and acts as a consultant for a range of Pharma companies. Dr. Shiels has a proven track record in public dissemination of his research, including the provision of expert commentary for the BBC and ABC TV networks and as a Panellist at the Edinburgh International Science Festival and the Edinburgh International Book Festival.



**Patrick J. Stover, Ph.D.**  
*Texas A&M University*  
**Speaker, Planning Committee Member**

Patrick Stover is director of the Institute for Advancing Health through Agriculture and professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics and Texas A&M University. The Stover research group investigates the fundamental chemical, biochemical, genetic and epigenetic mechanisms, and their associated pathways within the one-carbon metabolic network, that underlie the relationships among nutrition, metabolism and risk for birth defects, cancer and neurodegenerative diseases. Previously, Dr. Stover was vice chancellor and dean for Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M AgriLife. As vice chancellor, Dr. Stover oversaw coordination and collaboration of the agriculture, academic and research programs across The Texas A&M University System, as well as four state agencies: Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory and Texas A&M Forest Service. As dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Dr. Stover led more than 7,000 students and 330 faculty members in 15 academic departments. He previously directed the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University. An international leader in biochemistry and nutrition, Dr. Stover focuses his research on the biochemical, genetic and epigenetic mechanisms that underlie the relationships between folic acid and human pathologies such as

developmental anomalies, neuropathies and cancer. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is also former president of the American Society for Nutrition and has served two terms on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board. Dr. Stover received his Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biophysics from the Medical College of Virginia.



**Robert B. Wallace, M.D., M.Sc.**

*University of Iowa*

**Speaker**

Robert Wallace is emeritus professor of epidemiology and internal medicine at the University of Iowa (UI) College of Public Health. He trained in general internal medicine. Dr. Wallace worked at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where he specialized in the epidemiology and control of several communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, mumps and rubella, smallpox, and agents more common in tropical countries, and the infectious causes of chronic illnesses, such as some cancers. At UI, Dr. Wallace researched the prevention and control of several chronic illnesses of older people, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other disabling conditions, including Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative conditions. He has served on US Preventive Services Task Force, and the National Advisory Committee on Aging (NIH), and he has served as Chair of the Epidemiology Section of the American Public Health Association. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, where he received the NAM's Walsh McDermott Medal in recognition for his distinguished service. Dr. Wallace has an M.D. from Northwestern University in Illinois and an M.Sc. from the State University of New York at Buffalo in epidemiology.