



"Seeing others be proud of their accomplishments is the most rewarding part of what I do."

Jung's major research area is the self-regulation of health behaviours, with a specialization in exercise, physical activity, and dietary behaviours.

Jung and her team develop, test, and implement self-regulatory skills interventions for individuals at risk or living with Type 2 Diabetes in the community.

Health officials estimate that in Canada one in every four adults will have prediabetes by 2025.

The number of people with diabetes and prediabetes is rising, both in Canada and around the world. Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects Canadians of all ages. If left uncontrolled, diabetes results in consistently high blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia), which can lead to serious complications such as cardiovascular disease, vision loss, kidney failure, nerve damage, and amputation. Fortunately, it is possible to remain healthy with diabetes through appropriate management and care. Mary Jung wants to help those living with type 2 diabetes or prediabetes create, and more importantly, maintain healthy habits. The developer and researcher has devoted her research career to investigating how to make lasting dietary and exercise changes.

Main Research Focus:

1. Development and testing of novel behaviour change strategies to promote health behaviours
2. Establishing and evaluating sustainable, community-based interventions that delay or stave off type 2 diabetes



MARY JUNG

About

Jung was drawn to exercise and health because she wanted to share the benefits of health with others. Jung's passion for helping others stick to their exercise routines began early. At the age of 15, Jung's research interest was born in others' successes when she started as a personal trainer and taught group fitness classes in Lindsay, Ontario. After graduating from high school Jung didn't think twice before deciding to pursue an undergraduate degree in Kinesiology at McMaster University. She continued to instruct fitness classes and personal train throughout her undergraduate, Master's and Doctorate degrees. Drawn to the research-driven School of Health and Exercise Sciences and outdoor recreation options that abound in the Okanagan, Jung began her research at UBC Okanagan following a postdoctoral fellowship at Western University in Ontario. Jung's passion for helping others improve their health is now primarily directed towards assisting individuals with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Using evidence-based behaviour change techniques, Jung designs diet and exercise interventions optimized for both effectiveness and sustainability. This has led to strong community partnerships that enable Jung to expand the reach of her programs, thereby helping more people in need. Committed to providing quality interventions that work, Jung's funded research also spans health program evaluation and testing mHealth technologies. Jung's research program is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canadian Foundation for Innovation, and private B.C. Foundations.

Research Environment

Jung is head of the Diabetes Prevention Research Group, founder of Small Steps for Big Changes, and director of the Centre for Health Behaviour Change which is currently being established at UBC's Okanagan campus. Jung's thriving research program welcomes a growing team of trainees from across the world to join in investigating self-regulation of diet and exercise behaviours, and program evaluation of intervention implementation and sustainability. Jung's innovative research is located in the new community-engaged research space at UBC's Okanagan campus, as well as at multiple locations throughout the community.

Next Stages

Working with the community in formulating what the next research endeavors are has been pivotal for Jung and the continuation of Jung's programs, including Small Steps for Big Changes. This ensures that the research is meaningful and useful to those who will use the knowledge, while also strengthening the team's genuine commitment to their partners. Jung and her team work diligently to engage community members in their research.



FEATURED PROJECT

Partnership sets-up university laboratory downtown Kelowna

Small Steps for Big Changes (SSBC) was originally developed in 2012 with an initial group of 32 participants with prediabetes. Since then, the personalized, one-on-one, training and counselling program has proven to result in long-lasting positive lifestyle changes for over 300 participants at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Participants, who were once inactive, were regularly exercising one year following the program and maintained their weight loss, fitness, and several other health markers associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. SSBC has now partnered with the YMCA Okanagan to offer the program at no cost to participants in all 3 Kelowna YMCA locations. The program is an effective, time-efficient, and free program to help make lasting lifestyle changes to lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The YMCA-UBC collaboration represents a unique form of research in action. While typically health research experiences a 17-year delay from study to practice, this community-based lab offers the program while continuing to gather evidence for wider adoption.

TO LEARN MORE:

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