

Life Is Change: Professional and Personal Updates

Blog post. May 2017.

I want to explain why and how I am semi-retiring. Though my work has been meaningful and gratifying over many years, I am ready to slow down my activities. 2016 was a momentous year for me. In my Presidential Lecture to Society of Behavioral Medicine in March 2017 I explained how Charles Dickens's book "Tale of Two Cities" seemed to describe my 2016. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Most of the events were excellent, such as highly-visible publications from our IPEN collaborations, leading three papers in the Lancet, being elected to the National Academy of Medicine, and being President of SBM, which included holding the Annual Meeting in San Diego. However, the biggest event of the year for me was traumatic. My wife and life partner of 39 years, Shemi, passed away on August 16, 2016. I appreciate the many heartfelt notes I received from friends and colleagues around the world. The remembrances of Shemi were touching and helped me focus on the many good times. Besides being a gentle person, great cook, and hostess, Shemi had a fertile creative life that resulted in dozens of artworks, plus stories and poems. I encourage you to visit the website I built for Shemi so you can enjoy scenes from her life and creations of her mind. www.shemiamarsisallis.com

After Shemi's death I decided to semi-retire so I could focus my energies on projects of highest priority and find more time for things I enjoy other than work. My retirement from UCSD was official at the end of January 2017, but I will continue to work on current grants. I am committed to ensuring the results of IPEN Adolescent and other projects are published and disseminated. Mike Pratt's arrival as a Professor in the UCSD Department of Family Medicine and Public Health provides an opportunity for extension of our active living work, because Mike has been collaborating on IPEN and Active Living Research for many years. Mike has already taken the lead on new grant proposals, working closely with our experienced staff. My main role will be to support, not lead, new projects.

My official retirement gives me freedom to pursue other opportunities. As of February 2017 I became a Professorial Fellow at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in Melbourne. I am attached to the Institute for Health and Ageing, and my main goal is to support the growth of excellent research within this new Institute. Although I will not be moving to Australia full-time I will visit several times each year. The connection with ACU builds on strengths, because my long-time IPEN colleagues Ester Cerin and Takemi Sugiyama are there, among others. Being together with Ester will produce important benefits for IPEN and other built environment studies. We are hiring a Research Fellow with advanced skills in statistics to work closely with Ester in analyzing IPEN data. ACU is supporting core staff of the IPEN Coordinating Center who are based at UCSD so we can continue our productivity. Thus, ACU is becoming a much more important center of action for IPEN.

Melbourne is a very comfortable place for me, having spent several months of my sabbatical there in 1995 and making several visits since then. Melbourne is the capitol of physical activity research in Australia, with longtime friends and colleagues including Neville Owen at Baker IDI and Swinburne University; Jo Salmon, Anna Timperio, Jenny Veitch and others at Deakin University; Billie Giles-Corti at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology; Brian Oldenburg at University of Melbourne; and David

Dunstan, Gavin Turrell, and Andrea Nathan also at ACU. I look forward to spending more time with these and other colleagues in Melbourne while enjoying the cultural amenities of the city.

I am looking forward to this change in focus and pace of professional activity. In speaking at the SBM Leadership Institute in March I emphasized the value of seeking out change and driving change, not just reacting to it. My new situation is a chance to act on my own advice. I am ready to start new adventures, some of them including the combination of dance and music, which can unite my professional and personal interests. I plan to stay active in research, writing, advocacy, and mentoring. I want to support others in taking the lead in fulfilling my career's mission of using evidence to move toward a more physically active world. Of course, I am committed to enjoying movement every day, and I envision that semi-retirement will allow me to more fully appreciate the wonder of life in our magnificent but fragile world.