

Shepard Award Winners, Part 3: Dr. Larissa Roux

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to MMWR's look at the scientists inside CDC. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

This is another in a short series of interviews with recipients of the prestigious Charles C. Shepard Award, which is presented annually to a CDC scientist in recognition of his or her work, the impact of that work on public health, their professional leadership, and recognition by peers. We are privileged to be speaking by phone today with this year's winner of the Shepard Award for Prevention and Control, Dr. Larissa Roux.

Dr. Roux is a consultant with CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. She holds an M.D. from the University of Alberta, she also holds a Ph.D. in Health Economics from the University of Calgary, and a Master's in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health. Congratulations and welcome to the show, Larissa.

[Dr. Roux] Thank you very much for having me; it's a pleasure to be on the show.

[Dr. Gaynes] Larissa, how did you come to work with CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity?

[Dr. Roux] Well, one of my life's passions is dancing, and I've been a big fan of how the human body elevates its performance in response to training, and this idea has very much shaped my professional path. I went through medical school and residency wondering how concepts of human performance and sport medicine could be applied to chronic disease and the health of populations, and my doctoral dissertation focused on an economic evaluation of different ways to manage obesity. When I finished, I was really keen to find out how well knowledge from the best obesity studies was being applied to influence the health of populations, and this is what really brought me to the CDC's doorstep. I came to the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity as a past doctoral fellow, to work with the world's experts on how to translate science into health policy.

[Dr. Gaynes] Larissa, you won the Shepard Award for some work that deals with the cost effectiveness of community-based physical activity. Tell us a little bit about that work.

[Dr. Roux] Yes, when I arrived at the CDC, our division was preparing an application for a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to look at physical activity strategies in communities across the United States. As a health economist, I was specifically interested in which physical activity promotion strategies provided the best value for investment, or if you will, the biggest bang for our buck. Logistically, this meant putting together a national team, which we called the Measurement of the Value of Exercise Team, or Project M.O.V.E. for short. We had health economists, epidemiologists, data analysts, and health policy experts on what I call our dream team, and bottom line, our project found that each of the interventions that we studied, regardless

of the broader strategy to which they belonged, each provided good value for money, and I think this study adds support to the idea that investment in disease prevention is indeed worthwhile.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can you tell us, what's your proudest or most satisfying accomplishment?

[Dr. Roux] My proudest moment so far, at least professionally, would have to be being invited to work at the CDC, and to be given the opportunity to work with a team of individuals who I respect greatly. It was one of my life's most exciting experiences to work with them on such an important project. The fact that our team was recognized with a Shepard Award, besides being an unbelievable honor, is a wonderful way to cap off one of the best experiences I've ever had.

[Dr. Gaynes] Larissa, can you give us some insight on your current work?

[Dr. Roux] At the moment we're looking at applying our physical activity cost effectiveness model to developing health policy in a few partner countries around the world. Physical inactivity and obesity are becoming global public health priorities, and with more and more competing demands for health care resources, picking the best investments has become more important than ever. I think that solutions to global health issues, such as obesity, certainly benefit greatly from the flow of ideas and techniques between investigators and policy makers across borders. So far, we've worked with groups across Latin America.

[Dr. Gaynes] What about your future goals?

[Dr. Roux] I guess my goal, in its broadest form, is to help to continue to find ways to make healthy eating and active living a part of our lives, regardless of our social or economic backgrounds. I think that this work will be complex and challenging and will require many different kinds of approaches, but I also think that promoting stronger and healthier societies will create amazing opportunities in the future.

[Dr. Gaynes] Larissa, thanks for taking the time to talk with us, and congratulations again on your great honor.

[Dr. Roux] Thank you so much.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.