



Amy Lazarus Yaroch, PhD

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Amy Yaroch is Executive Director at the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN), a non-profit research center in Omaha, Neb. She holds special appointments at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. She received her Ph.D. in nutrition, with an emphasis in behavioral science, from Emory University. She has worked as an Assistant Scientist at AMC Cancer Research Center in Denver, Colo., as well as a Program Director/Behavioral Scientist at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). At NCI, she oversaw research efforts in obesity prevention and skin cancer prevention.

Since 2009, Dr. Yaroch has been leading research and program evaluation efforts at GSCN in the areas of obesity prevention, food insecurity and local food systems. She oversees 17 employees and an average of 25 active projects annually. GSCN's work is funded by a combination of government, academic and foundation partners including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Dr. Yaroch's research incorporates a social ecological approach, working at individual, environmental and policy levels for positive behavior change. She has authored more than 130 papers and three book chapters. She aided on development of NCI's Family Life, Activity, Sun, Health, and Eating (FLASHE) Study, and led development of NCI's Food Attitudes and Behaviors (FAB) Survey. She has also led evaluation efforts for a number of initiatives including the CDC's National Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives and RWJF/American Heart Association's Voices for Healthy Kids, among many others. While at NCI, she participated in the launch of the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research and now serves as a consultant on evaluation efforts. Dr. Yaroch has served as a reviewer and chair on numerous grant review panels for the NIH, RWJF, USDA and others.

Dr. Yaroch has attended and presented at SBM conferences regularly since 1999, and she has been actively involved in the Society since that time. She served as a Member Delegate from 2013 to 2016 and on the Health Policy Council since 2017, co-authored several SBM position statements and serves as an Associate Editor for SBM's Translational Behavioral Science. She was inducted as a Fellow in 2017, and received the C. Tracy Orleans Distinguished Service Award in 2016. In addition, she helped plan the 2016 inaugural SBM Leadership Institute and continues to serve as a mentor.

Personal Statement

I am honored to be a nominee for president of the Society of Behavioral Medicine. For the past 20 years, I have been dedicated to behavioral medicine across multiple disciplines, including nutrition, obesity prevention and skin cancer prevention. My passion is to impact public health using a behavioral lens to achieve sustainable changes. I believe that as behavioral scientists, we should emphasize the importance of evaluation, particularly now when evidence-based research is being challenged. Researchers, educators and practitioners across academia, government, non-profit and other sectors can benefit from decisions rooted in sound evidence.

I am turning 50 this year and reflecting on life's milestones and contemplating new opportunities, so this nomination is particularly timely and meaningful to me. I attended my first SBM Annual Meeting in 1998 and since then, I have regularly attended and presented at the conference. I have been fortunate to have made friends, expanded my scientific knowledge and made invaluable professional and personal connections.

Effective leadership is a concept that resonates with me. I can bring to SBM a range of leadership skills that I have developed through my experience in academia, government, and now as executive director for a non-profit research center. Some of the skills that I have solidified throughout my career include evaluating and making strategic organizational decisions; motivating, guiding and mentoring staff members; networking and connecting people; and effective conflict resolution. I can offer these skills as SBM president and foster a collaborative environment within SBM.

If elected, I will focus on two primary efforts: (1) Supporting an environment that promotes ongoing collaboration between researchers, educators and practitioners in our mission of promoting positive behavior change. This can be achieved through expanding opportunities to engage practitioners in SBM in innovative ways. Specifically, I would work with the membership committee, the Special Interests Groups (SIGs), among others, to make this happen; and (2) Growing additional avenues for mentorship. I have seen firsthand the strong impact mentorship can have on a career, and that is why I have always supported these activities. It is critical that we groom the next generation of behavior change makers through continued expansion of the SBM Leadership Institute and other programming. The potential of SBM's future lies in full recognition and support of our very talented emerging members, and as president I will work to expand opportunities to foster learning and networking for junior and mid-career members.