Abstract
The overall goal of this honors thesis is to identify ways in which primary health care professionals might influence low-income school-aged children and their parents to “Rethink their Drink”, by limiting their consumption of sugar sweetened beverages (SSB’s). Children from low-income households are at a higher-risk for obesity. This risk can be modified however, by reducing intake of these beverages. As part of a larger effort to address this public health concern, my role will be to conduct qualitative research with health care professionals. The findings will be used to develop strategies for use in the primary health care setting.

Introduction
Sugar sweetened beverages (SSB’s) include drinks such as soft drinks, sweetened fruit and vegetable juices, sports drinks, and sweetened waters. The consumption of these beverages has increased among children in the U.S. and intake is particularly high among children in lower income households (French et al., 2010). These beverages add calories to children’s diets, but often have little nutritional value. In addition, consumption of SSB’s increases children’s risk of being overweight and obese (James and Kerr, 2005). Among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s seven strategies to reduce SSB consumption, is “screening and counseling about SSB consumption as part of routine medical care” and expanding “the knowledge and skills of medical care providers to conduct nutrition screening and counseling regarding SSB consumption” (CDC, 2010).

For my honors thesis and research, I am going to interview primary health care professionals about their role in reducing children’s intake of SSB’s. One potential outcome may be recommendations regarding assessment tools and educational methods that could be used by these providers with their pediatric patients. Previous research has shown the importance of communication when attempting to change dietary behaviors. It is beneficial to receive this communication from multiple sources, one of these being the primary health care provider.

Objectives
In an effort to reduce SSB consumption among low-income school age children in Northern Nevada, specifically those age 5-12, the overall purpose of this research study is to explore ways in which primary health care providers may reinforce educational messages regarding SSB’s with children and/or their parents during office visits. The specific research objectives are as follows:
1) Determine the extent to which primary health care providers currently do address SSB intake among their patients age 5-12 (school-age children).
2) Identify the methods that may be used by primary health care providers to assess SSB intake among their patients age 5-12.
3) Identify educational materials that primary health care providers may need in order to effectively address SSB intake among their patients age 5-12 (including materials for parents).
4) Identify perceived barriers among primary health care practitioners regarding their efforts to reduce SSB consumption among their patients age 5-12.

Plans for Research
In order to achieve the research objectives listed above, interviews will be conducted with primary health care practitioners in the Reno-Sparks area. These professionals will include pediatricians, family practice physicians, and nurse practitioners. These interviews will allow me
to gain an understanding of their current practice in regards to SSB’s; as well as explore ways in which their current practice may be altered such that they could reinforce the “Rethink Your Drink” messages with their young patients and parents. The following steps describe how the study will progress.

1) Write a semi-structured interview guide. This interview guide will consist of a series of open-ended questions related to the objectives listed above. The interview guide will be reviewed by experts and pre-tested prior to its use.

2) Prepare and submit protocol to the Office of Human Research Protection. The study will not commence until approval has been received from the OHRP. This protocol will include details regarding informed consent, data collection and storage, and privacy and confidentiality.

3) Recruit primary health care providers/practitioners. Specifically, I will be recruiting primary health care providers who routinely see children living in households with limited resources (e.g., Medicaid eligible). Dr. Benedict will send letters to community health centers to solicit their cooperation with this study. Individual practitioners will be recruited from the participating health centers.

4) Conduct approximately 15 – 20 interviews. Each interview will be audio-recorded.

5) Transcribe interviews. A written record or each interview will be produced.

6) Conduct qualitative analysis of resulting data. NVIVO qualitative software will be used to code the data; resulting codes will then be analyzed to identify themes.

**Timetable**

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**Plans for Dissemination of Results**

When I complete my research project, I will prepare a final report and present it at a poster session at the Nevada Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Spring of 2012. The report and the poster will represent the research completed during the course of the funded project period.

**Qualification of the Student**

I qualify to conduct this research for many reasons. I have worked on a separate research project with Dr. Benedict before; I transcribed a series of interviews for this project. I also have a good understanding of nutrition because this is my area of specialty. I understand the responsibilities of health care professionals because I work and interact with them at the VA hospital. Due to my past experience and knowledge I will be able to successfully complete this research project.
Works Cited


General Undergraduate Research Award Budget Proposal

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<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<td>ADA FNCE*</td>
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Date: 9/24/11-9/27/11
Location: San Diego, CA

Justification: Going to the FNCE conference will be beneficial for me and my research. Sugar Sweetened Beverages are taking the forefront of nutritional concerns. The newly released US Dietary Guidelines discuss the importance of reducing the intake of SSB's. Because this is becoming such a serious concern, I am anticipating that there will be multiple presentations related to my research topic. In addition, I will have the opportunity to talk personally with other dietetic professionals who are working in this area.

Printing Supplies

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Ink Cartridges (2): $174.99
Poster: $15

Justification: I will need printer ink and paper to print my interview questions, transcriptions, and for my qualitative analysis results. The prices quoted here for the ink cartridges and paper were found on the HP website.

Interview Participant Incentive

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Gift (TBA) valued at $20 ~20 interviewee's

Justification: I am requesting funds to provide a small token of appreciation to each Health professional that participates in the interviews. The value of each token will be no more than $20. I cannot specify the item at this time because I intend to ask other health professionals (that I know) for their opinions about what would be appropriate. I believe this may enhance interview participation.

*American Dietetic Association Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo
March 7, 2011

To Members of the General Undergraduate Research Awards Committee:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Ms. Lisa Gilmore who is applying for an undergraduate research award to help offset costs related to her honors thesis. Ms. Gilmore enrolled at UNR in 2009 and is expected to graduate with a degree in nutrition (with honors) in May, 2012. Her academic record is impressive as are her contributions in the areas of leadership and community service. I have highlighted some noteworthy accomplishments below.

Ms. Gilmore has maintained a high GPA while enrolling in rigorous classes and completing a high number of credits each semester. In addition, she has assumed a leadership position in the Student Nutrition Association (Fundraising Chair), and has completed several volunteer experiences. One of the latter involves my research regarding the Washoe County School District Wellness Policy. Ms. Gilmore has contributed nearly 100 hours toward this study. These hours have included assessing school practices during numerous site visits, and most recently, transcribing interviews with school employees. Her performance has been on par with graduate students in our master’s program.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, Ms. Gilmore is also a volunteer for the Veterans’ Administration. Her specific duties relate to her passion for good nutrition as she assists at mealtime by delivering food trays and making mealtimes pleasant for the patients. This experience has afforded her many opportunities to interact with health care professionals.

As a part of a larger, multi-component social marketing campaign to address the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages among households enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) in northern Nevada, Ms. Gilmore will explore the roles of primary health care providers in accomplishing this goal. Preliminary discussions with select representatives have been very promising. However, more information is needed from these providers in order to fully develop and pursue this channel of communication.

Ms. Gilmore and I have had numerous discussions about her honors thesis. She is well-qualified to complete the tasks described herein. She has been involved with community research previously and assisted with qualitative methods specifically. Her strong communication skills, professional demeanor, and conceptual abilities are important assets here. I have no reservations about her ability to successfully complete this study and am prepared to assist her as needed. I will work closely with her to ensure that approval is granted from the Office of Human Research Protection to conduct the research. I will assume responsibility for recruiting health care
providers from community health centers that most often provide care to low-income families. Lastly, she and I will work together to develop the interview guide, code the resulting qualitative data, and complete the analysis.

Within the past five years, I have worked with one other student who was granted a General Undergraduate Research Award; Mr. Wayne Mackey. He returned his award however, due to challenges encountered working with patients suffering from HIV. I don’t anticipate similar issues for Ms. Gilmore.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of Ms. Gilmore’s proposal.

Sincerely,

Jamie Benedict, Ph.D., R.D.
Associate Professor