

INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR

CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONVERSATION



The use of illicit drugs in the United States is increasing, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. While rates of alcohol dependence have declined slightly during the past decade, more than 17.7 million Americans still suffer from alcoholism. Similarly, although smoking rates are down, more than 22 percent of the population still smokes regularly.

To address these and other addiction-related public health issues, in 2013 the Indiana University School of Public Health–Bloomington established, through a \$30,000 Ingenuity Grant, the Institute for Research on Addictive Behaviors (IRAB).



Led by associate research scientist **Ruth Gassman**, IRAB aims to advance basic and translational research on addictive behavior, supporting a broad range of projects on topics such as substance abuse, eating disorders, compulsive gambling, and sexual disorders.

“IRAB is earning a stellar reputation in the IU School of Public Health–Bloomington as the ‘go-to’ place for support and coordination of research on addictive behaviors,” says Gassman, who also serves as director of the Indiana Prevention Resource Center. “We believe those interested in studying addictive behaviors will find the networks of researchers being assembled and the informational resources posted on the website very helpful.”

With a focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and professional development, IRAB offers myriad resources for researchers in and beyond the school. Gassman says the institute is bringing together scholars from numerous disciplines including public health, psychology, counseling, education, social work, and sociology. “Each of these fields has an angle on addictive behaviors that are useful to understanding the nature of the problems,” Gassman says. This fall the institute coordinated a series of campus-wide “Science of Team Science” workshops and seminars. This initiative, she says, “brings national experts on team science to IU to share

their research and wisdom on strategies promoted by the National Institutes of Health and other funding agencies.”

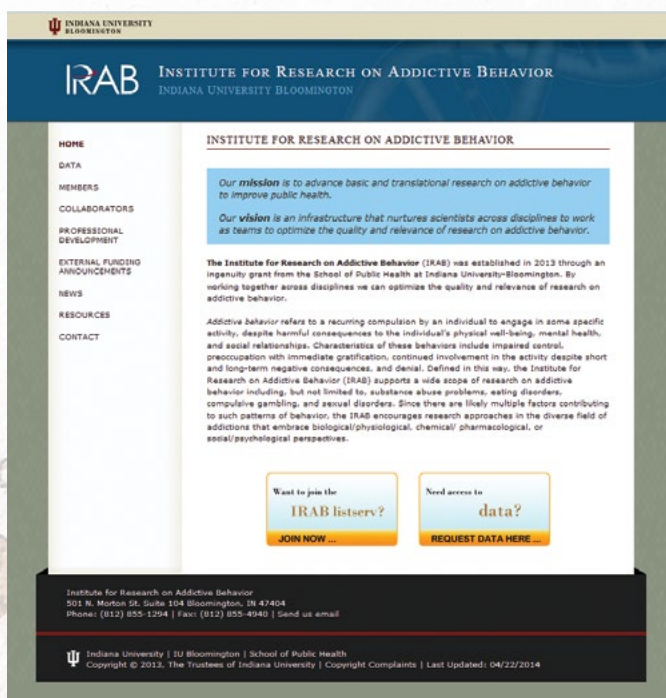


Ruth Gassman

IRAB also provides students and faculty with access to survey data for use in their research, teaching, and service learning. Data sets include the Indiana University Public Health Survey (a multi-domain survey of all undergraduate students in the IU School of Public Health–Bloomington); Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents; and the Indiana College Substance Use Survey.

IRAB has already had a significant impact on addiction research at IU, Gassman says, and she hopes the institute will continue to grow in scope and stature. “IRAB offers a doorway for those interested in becoming involved in addiction research, and our faculty and staff are ready to assist with a host of information, data, networking, and consulting resources to support research in addictive behaviors. My hope is to foster new research directions in this important area of public health.”

Visit the IRAB website for more information at irab.indiana.edu. ■



DID YOU KNOW?

The President's Challenge, administered by the IU School of Public Health—Bloomington Department of Kinesiology, is the premier program of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition and is managed through a co-sponsorship agreement with the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America, formerly the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance).

The program's aim is to encourage all Americans to make physical activity part of their everyday lives. Designed to help motivate participants to make positive changes no matter where they are starting with their fitness levels, the President's Challenge focuses on fun as the key to success.

“We are proud to play such an important role in helping millions of Americans through the efforts of the President's Challenge,” notes Dean **Mohammad Torabi**. “By combining research-based information, easy-to-use tools, and friendly motivation, the President's Challenge has inspired and energized people in a way that promotes health, prevents disease, and improves quality of life. These are goals that mirror our values at the school.”

Learn more at presidentschallenge.org.