

Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

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Inside This Issue

Page 2: Director's Corner, News & Funding

Page 3: Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

Page 4: Research & Kids' Health Corner

Page 5: Policy/Built Environment Corner

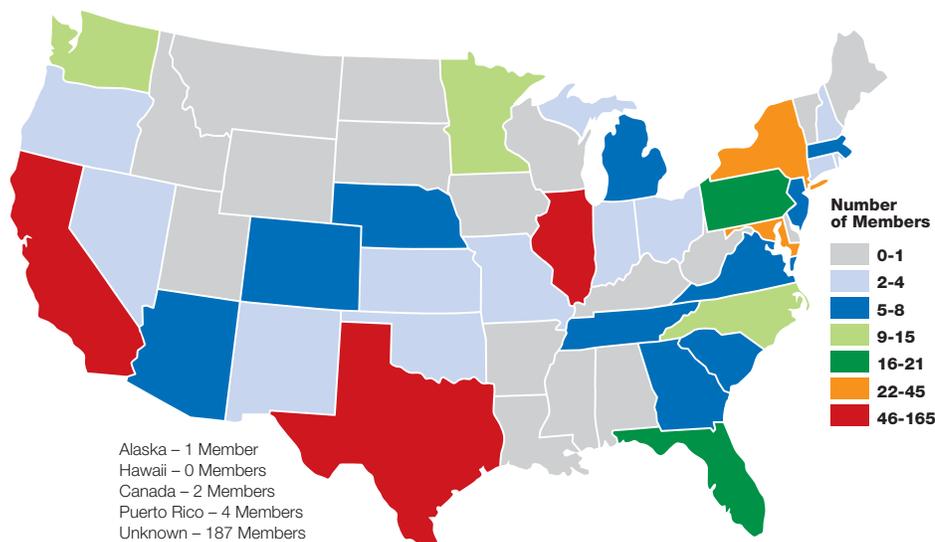
CFP Coming Soon!

In December 2008, *Salud America!* will issue a call for proposals (CFP) for more than a dozen pilot research projects dedicated to addressing Latino childhood obesity. Visit www.salud-america.org, to join our network, receive our E-newsletter and get the latest news on the release of the CFP. You can also receive other updates on our program and Latino childhood obesity research, training, education and other funding opportunities.

Share Your News

We welcome your news items, story ideas and suggestions. Please send them to saludamerica@uthscsa.edu to be featured in the E-Newsletter or other communications.

Salud America! Gaining Support to Fight Latino Childhood Obesity



Network Reaches 786 Members as it Readies for Research Agenda, CFP

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is building a strong foundation as it prepares to address Latino childhood obesity.

The network has recruited 786 members and launched a Delphi survey among those members to prioritize Latino childhood obesity research areas. Once survey results are in, the network will analyze results, publish research priority recommendations, and draft a Latino childhood obesity research agenda.

Guided by this research agenda, in December 2008 the network will issue a call for proposals (CFP) for pilot research grants that address Latino childhood obesity. Each pilot grant will award up to \$75,000 over two years.

“We hope our grants generate new, innovative research on Latino childhood obesity and inform obesity prevention efforts tailored to the specific needs of Latino children, their families, and communities,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!*, headquartered at Dr. Ramirez’ Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

The CFP will be announced to *Salud America!* members through the network’s monthly E-alert and quarterly E-newsletter. CFP information also will be posted on the network’s Web site, www.salud-america.org.

To receive network communications, sign up via the network’s Web site.

“We’re really looking forward to making great strides to reduce and prevent childhood obesity among Latino children,” Dr. Ramirez said.



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org. The *Salud America!* E-newsletter is distributed quarterly to its national membership network.

Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

My family, like many Latino families in and around Laredo, Texas, didn't have a lot of resources when I was a kid growing up. But my parents made a strong effort to make my siblings and I eat well. Our food was fresh and homemade—we rarely ate at a restaurant—and meal portions were always small. My mom pushed fruits as snacks, and I can remember dinners of chicken, grilled meats or my dad's vegetable-filled stew, alongside a balance of veggies, beans or a starch like rice or potatoes. And after eating, we were allowed to go outside and play and ride bikes on the dirt roads near our home.

Unfortunately, my upbringing is a rare case. Many Latinos rely on unhealthy fast food and don't have the resources to provide their children with fresh produce or safe places to play. As a result, Latino children are among the most obese in America.

That is why *Salud America!* is starting to identify interventions and policies to reduce childhood obesity and give parents, schools, individuals and policy-makers



Ramirez

the practical tools and education they need to keep kids healthy. I want to thank you for joining in our effort, and thank you for reading this first E-newsletter. We hope you will find this E-newsletter an attractive, informative way to keep up with updates on our exciting national program and grant opportunities, as well as the latest news on Latino childhood obesity in general. Feel free to circulate it among your colleagues.

We hope you will enjoy your experience in our network as well. Our combined efforts can help make a difference in the fight against the growing epidemic of Latino childhood obesity. Visit our Web site, www.salud-america.org, for more information on the epidemic and our efforts to address it.

We're working to help Latino kids eat well and move more—and we hope you'll join our efforts!

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio



News Briefs

Salud America! Survey Seeks to Identify Latino Childhood Obesity Research Priorities

Salud America! is conducting a three-round Delphi survey among those members to prioritize Latino childhood obesity research areas. The first two rounds have concluded, but the third round is expected to begin by July 14, 2008, and end Aug. 1, 2008. For every survey round taken, participants will earn one entry into a random drawing for \$500. To take the survey, visit the [survey page](#), log in using the name "ihpr" and the password "ihpr123," and follow the remaining prompts.

Salud America! director serves as a source on Latino childhood obesity

Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, talked about Latino childhood obesity at several recent conferences and media interviews. She gave valuable insight into the epidemic and spoke about how *Salud America!* plans to respond to it at the "1st Latino American Forum on Health and Disparities in Latino Communities: Obesity, Asthma and STI," on February 29, 2008, in Puerto Rico, and to medical students at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio on June 9. Dr. Ramirez also was quoted about Latino childhood obesity in the "It's Not Just Genetics" article in the June 23, 2008, edition of *Time Magazine*.

Funding Opportunities

In late May, *Active Living Research* and *Healthy Eating Research*, two Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) national programs that support research to identify policy and environmental strategies for increasing physical activity, promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity, opened calls for proposals (CFPs). The objective of these rapid-response grants is to support time-sensitive, opportunistic studies that evaluate changes in policies or environments with strong potential to reach children at highest risk for obesity. This includes African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander children in low-income communities or communities with limited access to affordable, healthy foods or safe opportunities for physical activity. Up to \$800,000 total will be awarded for rapid-response research grants in 2008, with a single-grant maximum of \$150,000 over 12 months. For more information or to apply, visit the program Web sites, www.activelivingresearch.org or www.healthyeatingresearch.org.

On May 30, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation issued a CFP that will support faith-based coalitions to advance community policies or environmental changes that improve access to healthy foods and/or opportunities for physical activity. The grants will focus particularly on changes that reach children at greatest risk for obesity, including African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian American and Pacific Islander children who live in low-income communities or communities with limited access to affordable healthy foods or safe opportunities for physical activity. The deadline for proposals is July 25, 2008. For more information, please [click here](#).

Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

Future doctors, nurses to model healthy nutrition, physical activity for middle-school children

Teens from a San Antonio barrio will learn about the importance of physical activity, healthy eating and other healthy behaviors from future doctors and nurses this summer, thanks to a new class at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

The “Healthy Choices for Kids” class, developed by the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics and the School of Nursing, pairs medical and nursing students with San Antonio’s Good Samaritan Center to develop a curriculum to teach and model healthy living practices to middle-school teens at a summer-long day camp.

Ashley Garcia, a second-year medical student at the Health Science Center, said the class is excited to promote good health among community children.

“Kids are very perceptive. They’ll watch what we do. I’ll talk about how I eat, how I fit activity into my day and how I make healthy choices daily,” said Garcia, who is from Victoria, Texas. “The more they can identify with me, the more they’ll take to heart what we have to say.”

Drs. Ruth E. Berggren and Adelita Cantu of the Health Science Center created the class to offer medical and



Berggren

nursing students a hands-on learning experience that allows them to intervene in the local community on behalf of children’s health.

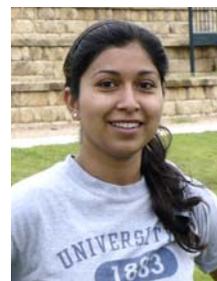
Berggren, colleague Amanda Evrard, and Cantu, who is on the Good Samaritan Center’s Board of Directors, conducted informal interviews with parents who enrolled their children for the center’s camp. They found that parents wanted their children to learn about nutrition and exercise because the obesity rates and diabetes risk among residents in predominantly Latino South Texas are higher than in the rest of Texas.

The medical and nursing students attend lectures about the key health topics identified by parents and spend two months visiting the Good Samaritan Center to develop a camp curriculum.

“A pre-prepared external curriculum is going to be less effective than one developed within the community,” Berggren said. “Change that is believable and sustainable comes from within the group. Otherwise, it’s some kind of external gimmick.”

Students hope they can make a big impact on the health of children and their families.

“I want to be able to get my [future] patients into programs that can effect real change not only in them, but also their family and friends,” Garcia said.



Garcia

Meet the *Salud America!* Executive Workgroup

As an undergraduate student at the University of Miami in the 1990s, Dr. Frank J. Penedo wasn’t sure what health field he wanted to pursue.

Enter Dr. Susan Lutgendorf.

Dr. Lutgendorf, then a graduate student in clinical health psychology, introduced him to the study of the mind-body connection and how psychosocial processes, such as stress and coping, can affect the endocrine and immune systems on one hand and disease processes on the other.

“As a pre-med student, I became passionate about studying the connection between mental and

physical health,” said Dr. Penedo, thanks to Dr. Lutgendorf’s mentorship. “Because this is an interdisciplinary field, I have been able to blend my interests in psychology, medicine, culture and health disparities to better understand many different determinants of health and disease. I became very involved in research early on and sought graduate student and faculty mentors in my field.”

Today, Dr. Penedo is working to improve Latino health as an associate professor of clinical health psychology and cancer biology at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami.

His research focuses on chronic

disease management, psychosocial interventions in chronic disease populations, behavioral medicine and other topics in cancer, health disparities, and other areas.

On the *Salud America!* Executive Workgroup, Dr. Penedo brings expertise in developing methods to promote nutrition and physical activity and prevent obesity and related chronic diseases that are linguistically and culturally appropriate to the Latino community.

“Any approach must be interdisciplinary and occur at multiple levels—communities, schools and families—if we are to curtail the growing rates of obesity among Latino children,” said Dr. Penedo.



Penedo

The *Salud America!* Executive Workgroup

Elva Arredondo

Laura Brennan-Ramirez

Nancy F. Butte

Robert Garcia

Lawrence Green

Robin Hamre

Terry Huang

Catherine Loria

Judith Ottoson

► Frank J. Penedo

Charlotte Pratt

Maya Rockeymoore

James Sallis

Mary Story

Elsie M. Taveras

Amy L. Yaroch

Fast-food ads may prompt obesity in Latino kids

Commercials for unhealthy, fast food on Spanish-language TV may be contributing to a rise in Latino childhood obesity, according to research by Johns Hopkins Children's Center.

Latino children have higher overall rates of obesity and overweight than either African-American or non-Hispanic white children.

The study, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, appeared in the April 2008 issue of the *Journal of Pediatrics*. Researchers reviewed 60 hours of programming airing between 3 and 9 p.m. on Univision and *Telemundo*, Spanish-language TV networks that reach 99 and 93 percent of Latino households, respectively, according to a news release from the Johns



Hopkins Children's Center in Maryland.

Each channel aired two or three food commercials each hour, with one-third specifically targeting children. Nearly half of all food commercials featured fast food, and more than half of all drink commercials promoted soda or high-sugar drinks.

"While we cannot blame overweight and obesity solely on TV

commercials, there is solid evidence that children exposed to such messages tend to have unhealthy diets and to be overweight," said lead investigator Dr. Darcy Thompson, a pediatrician at Hopkins Children's Center, in a news release.

Study investigators suggest that young children should be restricted to no more than two hours of TV viewing per day and parents should talk to them about healthy diet and food choices. Researchers also recommend that pediatricians caring for Latino children be aware of their patients' heavy exposure to food ads and their possible effects, and that public health officials should urge policy-makers to limit food advertising to children.



Research Briefs

Less sleep, more TV leads to overweight toddlers

Infants and toddlers who sleep less than 12 hours a day and who watch two or more hours of TV a day are twice as likely to become overweight by age 3 than children who sleep longer, according to a news release about a study led by Dr. Elsie Taveras of Harvard Medical School. The study, published in the April 2008 issue of *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, examined 915 mother-infant pairs. "Getting enough sleep is becoming more and more difficult with TV, Internet, and video games in the rooms where children sleep," Dr. Taveras said in a statement. "Our findings suggest that parents may wish to employ proven sleep hygiene techniques, such as removing TV from children's bedrooms, to improve sleep quality and perhaps sleep duration."

More women develop diabetes before pregnancy, endangering newborns

Twice as many women with diabetes gave birth in 2005 as in 1999, according to a new study from Kaiser Permanente and reported April 28, 2008, by Ivanhoe Newswire. The study, which examined more than 175,000 teens and adults who gave birth in California, found that pre-pregnancy diabetes increased fivefold among women ages 13 to 19 and doubled among those ages 20 to 39. Hispanics, African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islander women were more likely to have diabetes before becoming pregnant than white women. According to the report, researchers believe more young women are starting their reproductive years with diabetes, reflecting increasing rates of overweight and obesity. They stress taking steps to reduce women's blood sugar levels and increase overall health.

Kids' Health Q&A

Question 1: Executive Workgroup member Dr. Frank J. Penedo, how do you get your nieces and nephews to eat healthy and exercise?

"I must say, lead by example. Kids love to imitate their loved ones. If you develop your own healthy habits, such as eating lots of fruits and vegetables and being physical active (flipping through channels with the remote control does not count), it will be easier for you to convince your kids that these are good behaviors. Make these good habits a part of your daily healthy routine and you will not only develop healthier kids, but also get to spend more time with them."

– Dr. Frank J. Penedo
University of Miami

Question 2: What do kids need for proper hydration this summer, and for fall sports?

"The blazing heat of summer can trigger the body to sweat to cool itself, increasing the need for fluids. This is the same in adults as it is for children. So be sure your children and teenagers drink plenty of water—six to eight 8-ounce servings a day. Also, steer clear of sodas and teas, because those don't replenish fluids lost through sweat."

– Dr. Patricia Chalela
UT Health Science Center
at San Antonio

Policy/Built Environment Corner

RWJF report highlights legislative successes, challenges

In June 2008, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released the 2007 edition of BALANCE, a report that summarizes state legislative action to promote nutrition, increase physical activity and prevent obesity. The report, authored by the Albermarle State Policy Center (ASPC), highlights several significant advances:

- ▶ Twenty-five states launched a pilot project or created a task force, council or commission to improve the nutrition and physical activity environments for children or prevent obesity.
- ▶ Lawmakers in 16 states enacted legislation to increase farm-to-school programs or to improve the nutritional quality of school breakfasts, lunches, à la carte selections or vending machine offerings.
- ▶ Seven states enacted legislation to promote farmers' markets—and a growing number of states also are working to increase access to fresh affordable foods through grocery stores.
- ▶ Some states are considering policies that would require restaurants to provide nutritional information for the foods they offer, and nine states or localities enacted legislation to regulate the use of trans fat.
- ▶ Policy-makers in 20 states considered legislation to promote safe physical activity, pedestrian and bicycle transportation and/or efforts to design communities that support physical activity.
- ▶ Sixteen states supported policies to strengthen physical education classes or physical activity programs in schools.
- ▶ Eleven states enacted laws concerning student BMI measures and/or physical fitness assessments.

Many challenges remain at all levels, and further efforts are necessary to increase children's access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity and to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, according to the BALANCE report. To view the full report, please click [here](#).

Policy/Built Environment News Briefs

RWJF's Childhood Obesity Update Includes Five-Step Framework for Effective Policies

In May Robert Wood Johnson Foundation President and CEO Risa Lavizzo-Mourey provided an update on RWJF's efforts to prevent childhood obesity in the year since the foundation committed at least \$500 million to the issue. The update included information on efforts to improve coordination among groups working to prevent childhood obesity, build the evidence base, put research into action and advocate for change. Lavizzo-Mourey highlighted five steps communities can use as a guide to developing their own policies and programs. The five steps are based on evidence that five things work to increase physical activity and healthy eating among children and adolescents, decrease sedentary behavior and—in some cases—even reduce obesity: Provide healthier foods to students at school; improve the availability of healthy foods at home; increase the



Lavizzo-Mourey

frequency, intensity and duration of physical activity at school; improve access to safe places where children can play; and limit screen time. "Everyone can help implement these five steps—an individual parent making changes at home; a principal, teacher or PTA member working through the school system; or a government leader at the community, state or federal level," Lavizzo-Mourey said in the report. "And best of all, these approaches are based on the best available evidence. If communities throughout the nation achieved all five goals, I am confident we would reverse the obesity epidemic."

Study links where you live to risk for obesity, diabetes

A new study in California shows there is a correlation between where people live and their risk for obesity or diabetes, according to a PolicyLink news release. The study, *Designed for Disease: The Link Between Local Food Environments and Obesity and Diabetes*, analyzed the health of 40,000 Californians and the food establishments around their homes. People in neighborhoods with lots of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, but few grocery

or produce stores, were at a significantly higher risk of diabetes and obesity. "Maybe it's time to consider adding the fast-food joints and convenience stores around every corner to the Environmental Protection Agency's list of known environmental toxins. This study suggests that they may quite literally be making us sick," said Harold Goldstein of The California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA), one of the one of the study authors, in a written statement in the news release. The CCPHA, PolicyLink and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research combined on the study, click [here](#).

Healthy Schools Program offers tools for schools

The Healthy Schools Program (HSP) offers technical assistance and solutions for promoting physical activity and healthy eating so that schools can become healthier places for students. For more information on their best-practice program that provides schools with on-site and online technical assistance and resources, as well as national awards for school-based efforts to create healthier school environments, click [here](#).