

Inaugural ***Salud America!*** Scientific Summit Report

September 9–11, 2009 • San Antonio, Texas

Salud America!

The RWJF Research
Network to Prevent
Obesity Among
Latino Children



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

 INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH PROMOTION RESEARCH
UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER®
SAN ANTONIO



Inaugural **Salud America!** Scientific Summit Report



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Salud America!, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), conducted its Inaugural Scientific Summit on September 9-11, 2009, at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. This Summit Report is a description of the event. *Salud America!* aims to unite, and increase the number of, Latino researchers engaged in research on environmental and policy solutions to the obesity epidemic among Latino children. 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. *Salud America!* is funded by RWJF (Grant No. 64756).



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Did you know?

We asked this question to kick off the Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit, then followed it with the alarming statistics about obesity and Latino childhood—about how they have less access to healthy foods and fewer opportunities for physical activity.

Latino children face many health challenges, and our summit audience of 200 researchers, community leaders and policy-makers got the message.

We went on to highlight the work being done to reduce and prevent Latino childhood obesity, identify avenues for collaboration, and inspire attendees to improve policy, the built environment and more.

Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the United States, spoke passionately about upping the investment in culturally sensitive obesity interventions.

Former NBA basketball player Sean Elliott and his wife, nutrition expert Claudia Zapata, talked about their struggles and successes in building a healthy family.

Texas Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. exemplified how health-

conscious legislators can drive policies to prevent obesity among minority children.

I'd like to thank these and our other speakers, researchers, activists, policy-makers, *Salud America!* pilot investigators and attendees for presenting and discussing the latest advancements on childhood obesity at the summit.



Amelie Ramirez

I know we made great strides in galvanizing a national effort to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic among Latinos.

Now you know—and now we can work together to fight the epidemic!

Lance Armstrong supports efforts to address child obesity

In a pre-recorded video played at the *Salud America!* Scientific Summit, champion cyclist and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong thanked program leaders and summit attendees for their much-needed work to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.



Photo from the Lance Armstrong Foundation

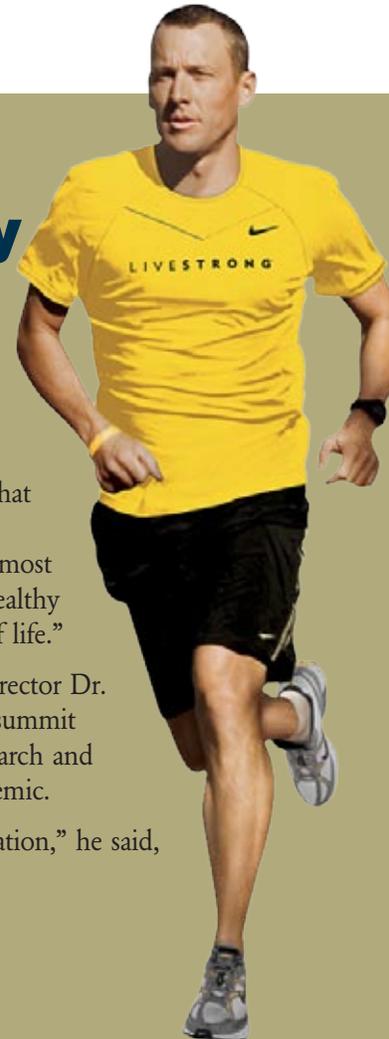
Armstrong, founder and chairman of the Lance Armstrong Foundation to unite and empower people affected by cancer, said childhood obesity hits close to home for him.

“As a parent myself and somebody who deals with the

challenges of parenthood... and trying to create great habits, encourage exercise, encourage healthy lifestyles—we know what this means,” Armstrong said. “We know that it prevents issues like cancer, issues like heart disease, and most importantly, it promotes a healthy lifestyle and a high quality of life.”

He lauded *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez and the summit audience for conducting research and programs to reduce the epidemic.

“From all of us at the foundation,” he said, “we thank you.”



Keynote Speaker: Dr. Richard H. Carmona



Richard H. Carmona

Reporters peppered U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona with questions on war, anthrax and infections at a press conference in fall 2002.

But when asked to name the “biggest problem,” he stunned the crowd with his answer.

“I said, ‘Obesity.’ The room was dead silent. Nobody knew what to ask me after that,” Dr. Carmona recalled. “I said, ‘We have an unprecedented response now, rightfully so, to having been attacked on 9/11...but the data I’ve given you says we have nine million children that are overweight or obese...each one of those little children is a time bomb waiting to explode prematurely with unprecedented chronic disease.’”

Childhood obesity, he said, was “the terror within.”

And, on Sept. 10, 2009, Dr. Carmona reiterated his stance in a keynote speech at the inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit and called for greater research and policy action to prevent obesity among Latino children.

“We need more innovation. Things like *promotoras*, health care extenders, smart shoppers, increasing health

literacy so we can read the labels and understand what to buy, urban gardens, push carts of fresh fruit, early teaching of health habits,” he said. “Eliminate obesogenic environments—very important.”

Dr. Carmona, born to a low-income Puerto Rican family in New York City, experienced homelessness, hunger, and health disparities during his youth.

“I learned to swim in the Harlem River, which is why I’m so healthy today, because I’ve been exposed to every pathogen known to mankind,” he joked.

Continued on next page ►

Watch Video of Dr. Carmona’s Keynote **Speech**

View Dr. Carmona’s keynote speech, which starts about one-fourth of the way through the video.



Keynote Speaker: Dr. Richard H. Carmona

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He dropped out of high school but enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967 and served in Vietnam. He then attended Bronx Community College in New York and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1977. He earned a medical degree from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1979.

Trained in surgery, Dr. Carmona joined the Tucson Medical Center and the University of Arizona to start and direct Arizona's first regional trauma care system.

He was nominated by the president and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate to become the 17th Surgeon General in 2002.

Dr. Carmona's first year as "doctor of the nation" was frustrating as he tried to push public health awareness and advancements.

His famous press conference helped change that.

Calling childhood obesity "the terror within" grabbed media headlines—and prompted a call from the White House.

"The press guy of course says, 'Boss wants to know what you were thinking about when you said that,'" Dr. Carmona recalled. "I said, 'I was thinking about 9 million kids who are gonna die early. I was thinking about health disparities that are expressly in so-called minority communities where obesity is disproportionately represented as is chronic disease. Is that not an important a problem as protecting other national interests?'"

Dr. Carmona focused on prevention, preparedness, health disparities and global health in his four years as surgeon general.

"Seventy-five cents of every dollar spent is spent on chronic diseases, most of which are preventable," he said. "So if you're running a business, and I told you 75 percent of your revenue is going out the window on needless stuff, you wouldn't be the CEO long if you didn't change it."

To prevent childhood obesity, Dr. Carmona urged investment in culturally sensitive and literate public health campaigns.

For example, he says his New York barrio *abuelitas* (neighborhood grandmothers) wouldn't listen if they were told to eat right and stop cooking high-fat foods.

But if you tell *abuelita* that her grandchildren could suffer from diabetes and disease in the future, "she's going to move mountains to change what needs to be done," he said.

Dr. Carmona said that *Salud America!* and its members play a big role in making change.

"With the research like that at the University of Texas, Dr. Ramirez' leadership, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's leadership and support producing evidence-based practices that are culturally and linguistically appropriate," he said, "we can make a difference and decrease health disparities, increase health and wellness, decrease the cost of care, and improve the quality and quantity of life."



Panel: Making Legislative Advances

Three summit speakers went beyond raising awareness about childhood obesity and asked, “What can I do about it?”

Texas Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr., B.S.E., who represents a predominantly Latino constituency, has authored bills that boost access to nutritious foods in schools and coordinate obesity prevention throughout Texas.

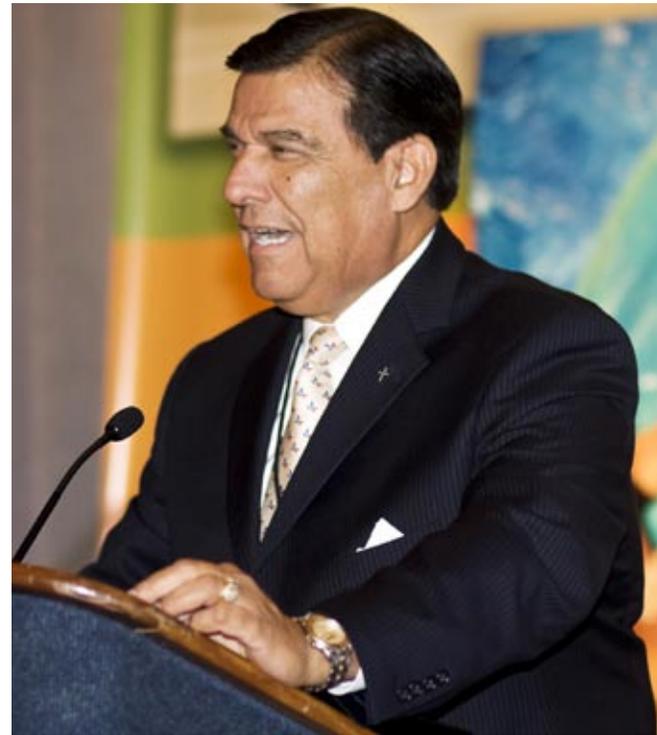
When evidence showed that more children were entering kindergarten overweight, Sen. Lucio pushed a bill to establish a council charged with development of a statewide plan to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and educational outreach.

“I can think of no other form of prevention better than instilling healthy eating and activity habits in our youngest children,” he said. “My hope is that, in doing so, a healthy lifestyle will become the norm, rather than a goal to aspire to.”

At the national level, Mildred Thompson, M.S.W., is helping turn the new RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity into the go-to organization to coordinate communities, researchers, policy-makers and media outlets that are working to reverse the epidemic.

“We want to make sure there is one central place in which we have some accountability and responsibility to try to bring these groups together and really begin to address the nation’s childhood obesity problem,” said Thompson, deputy director of the RWJF [Center](#).

Finally, Arturo Vargas, M.Ed., executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed



Texas Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr.

Officials’ educational fund, urged reforms to the 2010 U.S. Census, emphasizing that it must accurately count Latinos.

In 2000, the Census did not include 3 percent of the entire Latino population, he said. An undercount has critical implications because state and federal funding for health care, public transportation and community development hinges on U.S. Census numbers.



(L-R) Panel moderator Juliet Garcia and panelists Arturo Vargas and Mildred Thompson

In addition to improving the count, Vargas urged policy-makers to recognize its potential for helping create a healthy environment for their constituents.

“A significant Census undercount could disproportionately impact communities that serve large numbers of Latino children and families,” Vargas said. “This means communities with highest need may not receive funding.”

Panel: Making Policy and Environmental Changes

Addressing childhood obesity requires policy, built environment and community-level changes targeting the needs of Latino communities, according to three summit speakers.

“Our efforts must really focus on creating communities of opportunity,” said Amanda Navarro, Dr.P.H., associate director of PolicyLink. “Creating these communities of opportunity will ensure that there’s good health for millions of children and families, especially Latinos, across this country.”

That’s why PolicyLink leads the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Convergence Partnership, a collaborative of funders and the CDC that works on equity-focused policy and environmental change to create healthy places for healthy people.

HEAL works to seed, strengthen and leverage regional initiatives; help community advocates maximize their efforts; stimulate resources targeting specific issues of local concern; and build new connections and leadership, Navarro said.

And in a state where Latinos face food deserts and unhealthy media messages, The California Endowment translates policy and environmental changes to build



health, said George Flores, M.D., M.P.H., the endowment’s senior program officer.

Area obesity prevention programs partner with communities, schools and government to target food and activity environments.

“There are literally hundreds of [examples] cropping up in these places,” Flores said. Examples include creating farmer’s markets and opening school grounds after hours

to allow for use by those who “didn’t have access to a playground or park before.”

Still, it takes the federal government to mobilize the nation in such a community-based effort, said Jeffrey Levi, Ph.D., executive director of Trust for America’s Health.

A report by Levi’s group found that an investment of \$10 per person per year in community-based prevention programs focused on activity, nutrition and smoking cessation could save more than \$16 billion annually within five years.

“This is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1 invested,” said Levi, noting that the president’s commitment to prevention and the recent stimulus funding for clinical and community-based prevention programs are good examples for states and communities.



(L-R) Amanda Navarro, George Flores and Jeff Levi

Panel: Building up the Built Environment



(L-R) Marcia Ory, Samuel Dennis Jr. and Robert Garcia

Research shows that today's built environment—roads, sidewalks, buildings and trails that provide settings for activity—impacts obesity levels, especially among minority children.

A panel of experts revealed unusual ways to improve the built environment.

Participatory photo mapping (PPM) is a strategy to better understand and document people's experience of health and place by having them take photos and do interviews, then tracking those locations with Geographic Information System (GIS) maps.



success. The park is transformed from an unwelcoming place to a welcoming place," Dennis said.

In Central Los Angeles, minority children from low-income families lack access to parks. The area has barely half an acre of urban parks for every 1,000 residents, compared to thousands of acres in wealthier areas, said Robert Garcia, J.D., founder and executive director of The City Project in California.

Garcia said his group works with the community to get policy-makers to support policies that develop and save such green spaces as the Rio de Los Angeles State Historic Park, which features children's soccer fields.

Meanwhile, Texas Childhood Obesity Prevention Policy Evaluation researchers have begun examining the effects of the Safe Routes to School program and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program's revised food package.

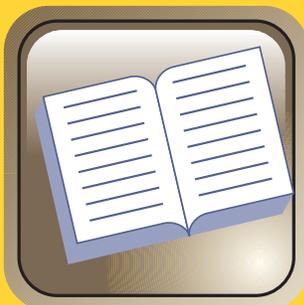
Will the safe routes program increase safety, walkability and bikeability around school grounds? Will WIC changes improve availability of healthy foods and influence food preferences? Policy-makers, scholars and communities will use the answers to these questions to "develop targeted approaches for different segments of at-risk populations," said Marcia Ory, Ph.D., M.P.H., Regent Professor, Texas A&M Health Science Center.



The photos, narratives and maps are presented to decision-makers to promote change, said Dr. Samuel Dennis Jr., Ph.D., assistant professor of landscape architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In Madison, PPM is having a positive effect. Latino children

used to feel unwelcome at a drop-in program at a local park, but organizers brought in a Spanish speaker to lead the program. "Huge

Panel: Partnering with Schools



A healthy school environment is vital to address Latino childhood obesity, given that about 20 percent of the U.S. population spends part of their day in schools.

A trio of Summit speakers gave examples of how

schools can get involved.

At the national level, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation offers its Healthy Schools Program to support efforts to create healthier school environments in which staff and students can work, learn and play.

The program involves thousands of schools, 26 percent of which have about one-third Hispanic students, said Joan Brucha, M.P.H., the Alliance's associate director. She urged school representatives to get their schools to join the Healthy Schools Program, convene a diverse school wellness council and make school meal programs and health education materials "responsive to and inclusive of the diversity of the student population."

In Texas, two programs are helping schools tackle Latino childhood obesity.

Roberto Treviño, M.D., who directs the Social and Health Research Center in San Antonio, works with dozens of school districts, many in low-income, primarily Latino areas, to deliver *Bienestar*, a diabetes prevention program to boost kids' fitness and healthy eating. *Bienestar* offers bilingual, culturally appropriate health educational materials for students, teachers and cafeteria workers.

"Students in the *Bienestar* program have reported increased dietary fiber intake, increased fitness levels and decreased blood glucose levels," Trevino said.

The Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program is another effort seeking to reduce childhood obesity rates. CATCH is an evidence-based, school-based program for healthy eating, physical activity and parental and community involvement.

"CATCH has been found to decrease child overweight and obesity [among low-income, young Hispanic children] when implemented with community-level programs," said Steven Kelder, Ph.D., M.P.H., co-director of the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Advancement of Healthy Living at the University of Texas School of Public Health.



(L-R) Roberto Trevino, Joan Brucha and Steven Kelder

Panel: Empowering Communities, Academia and Political Arenas

A trio of summit speakers talked about making an impact in politics, communities and academia to address childhood obesity, especially among Latinos.

John Govea, J.D., M.P.A., senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) gave a brief overview of RWJF's strategy for influencing policy.

First, the Foundation reviews the potential political impact by asking: Can RWJF make a difference? What are the barriers? RWJF then considers a measure's attainability, its potential impact on reversing the obesity epidemic, how it will reach at-risk and minority communities and the feasibility of measuring its success, Govea said.

A coordinated campaign includes "advocacy training, building alliances, research/advocacy coordination and messaging," Govea said.

At the community level, the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC) is organizing 10 Latino and minority communities to promote food access and activity and to strengthen clinic-community connections for effectively managing children with weight problems.

This effort adds produce-mobiles and culturally relevant physical activity to these communities, said Christine Bozlak, M.P.H., CLOCC advocacy program manager.

"CLOCC continues to work with these neighborhoods...and community-based organizations to pilot innovative programs and policies to reduce this health inequity," Bozlak said.

Academia also must set a good example for student health, said Daniel Hale, M.D.,



(L-R) John Govea, Christine Bozlak and Dan Hale

a professor of pediatrics at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Unfortunately, colleges and universities can promote sedentary behaviors, food access, stress and issues like "the freshman 15 but not the BMI of the dean," he said.

Hale encouraged teachers to be role models of health. "Pay attention to student activity levels and eating habits, and your own," he said. "Advocate for healthy alternatives. It can't hurt."



Panel: Making Initiatives Successful



Given the need for effective childhood obesity prevention programs and policies, a panel of summit speakers weighed in on how to foster successful initiatives.

Baker Harrell, M.Ed., who founded ACTIVE Life,

a burgeoning movement to generate greater demand for active lifestyles, touted a five-step process: redefine success; shift focus; go open source; leverage new media; and enlist your audience.

ACTIVE Life uses these steps to empower and enlist people to establish an active culture, Harrell said.

Policy-level interventions can alter physical and socio-political environments to help people adopt healthy behaviors, said Elizabeth Dodson, Ph.D., a research assistant professor at the Prevention Research Center at Washington University, St. Louis.

Dodson studied childhood obesity prevention legislation and interviewed legislators to see what influenced their decisions. National media exposure and introduction by senior legislators helped bills pass, but food industry lobbyists and misconceptions about negative outcomes for schools were barriers. Also, 73 percent said “childhood obesity prevention legislation is more likely to pass through a series of incremental bills” and not one comprehensive bill, Dodson said.

Arkansas legislators enacted a measure in 2003 to address childhood obesity with annual body mass index measurements reported

to parents and other activities.

Vending machine use decreased, while overall physical activity increased. No increase in dieting, weight-related teasing or embarrassment was found, said James Raczynski, Ph.D., professor and founding dean of the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, who evaluated the act’s impact.

“Substantial school environment changes have occurred,” Raczynski said.



(L-R) Baker Harrell, Elizabeth Dodson and James Raczynski

Changing Latino Lifestyles

Panel: Increasing Physical Activity



Kay Morris



Arthur Lopez

A trio of summit speakers is doing all they can to get Latino children active.

Hector Salazar, M.Ed., program manager for Playworks, helps the California-based group improve the health and well-being of children by increasing opportunities for physical activity and safe, meaningful play.

The program teaches activity classes, recess games, after-school activities and developmental sports leagues to teachers and youth service providers so they can promote play among primarily Latino children and teens.

Among those who had Playworks in their schools last year, "99 percent want Playworks at their school next year," Salazar said.

And how about getting Latino kids into pools?

Nadar Por Vida (Swimming for Life), founded by Arthur Lopez, J.D., mixes swim skills with life skills for disadvantaged Latino youths and their families.

The program, which is based in Northern Virginia, trains Latinos to swim to reduce high drowning rates and encourage "a lifestyle of physical involvement through swimming that can lead to success in academics and other sports," Lopez said.

Or how about getting a kid to run a marathon?



Hector Salazar

Marathon Kids, founded by Kay Morris, B.A., is doing that with its running/walking, nutrition and schoolyard gardening program for kindergartners up to fifth-graders. Children run in quarter-mile increments at school and home for six months until they reach 26.2 miles (using logbooks). Children in the program, which is based in Austin but has groups in other cities, also are urged to eat fruits and veggies.

Latino children like the program more than all children combined, and they also say logbooks help them run and walk more, Morris said.

Changing Latino Lifestyles

Panel: Nutrition and Families



Family eating habits greatly impact childhood obesity among Latinos, according to three nutrition researchers who spoke at the summit.

Parents can help create a healthy home environment, said

Guadalupe Ayala, Ph.D., M.P.H., an associate professor at San Diego State University. Her study, *Entre Familia: Reflejos de Salud*, aims to boost healthy eating by targeting Latino family dynamics.

Latino families watch a DVD sitcom series about a typical Latino family trying to make healthy lifestyle changes amid busy daily life, and they get a whole-family educational manual and help from *promotoras* who urge healthy eating.

These efforts require “an understanding of the whole family; working with the whole family; and creativity in both the content and delivery,” Ayala said.

But what do Latino parents of overweight children really think about healthy eating and physical activity? Glenn Flores, M.D., professor of pediatrics and public health at UT Southwestern Medical Center, used focus groups to



have Latino parents sample healthy versions of traditional Latino cuisine prepared by a Latino chef, such as whole-wheat enchiladas. Parents “couldn’t believe the enchiladas were whole wheat” and welcomed the idea of substituting foods, Flores said.

This means successful weight-management strategies for Latino children “may require both traditional approaches that integrate family preferences and involvement and culturally sensitive innovations,” he said.

The school food environment often is a model for Latino families, said Gail Woodward-Lopez, M.P.H., associate director of the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley. She found that students were eating less healthy at school and bought more competitive foods than school lunches.

Still, 68 percent of students perceived the school food environment as unhealthy and more than half valued fruit, salad and veggies as important.

“Students want healthier options—when they want them, they are more likely to eat them,” Woodward-Lopez said. “Changing the environment works.”



(L-R) Gail Woodward-Lopez, Glenn Flores and Guadalupe Ayala

Guest Speakers: Sean Elliott and Claudia Zapata

San Antonio Spurs forward Sean Elliott got free food as a perk for filming a commercial for Taco Cabana, a Mexican fast-food restaurant, early in his NBA career.

His pre-game meals? Guisada tacos and beef fajitas.

Either that or a Burger King drive-through order.

But his bad eating habits changed when he met his future wife, San Antonio Express-News health columnist Claudia Zapata—who dubbed him the “fast-food king.”

“She pretty much saved my diet,” said Elliott, now a Spurs broadcaster. “And now it’s funny when I see a lot of former players. There’ve been a few guys I can’t even recognize anymore, and a lot of the guys come up to me and say, ‘How are you doing it?’ because it’s so hard for former players to stay in good shape.”

Today, Elliott and Zapata work hard to make their family of five healthy—and they promoted building healthy Latino families at the *Salud America!* Scientific Summit.

Zapata implored advocates and policy-makers to give children more safe places to play and access to healthy foods.

She also urged researchers to consider Latinos’ cultural barriers.

For example, Latino parents equate food with love.

“When we’re at my parents’ house, when we wake up in the morning, my mom’s shoving 10 tacos down [Sean’s] throat,” Zapata said.

Elliott agreed. He joked: “Before I can even wake up, it’s, ‘Are you hungry? Can I bring you something?’ You say, ‘No, I’m fine.’ And you have four tacos, chorizo and egg with cheese and guacamole all smothered on top of them, right in front of you, and you just said, ‘No.’ What



Sean Elliott and Claudia Zapata

happens when you say, ‘Yes?’”

Elliott and Zapata cook most of their family’s meals at home and have their children spend at least one hour a day in physical activity.

Zapata tries to raise children’s awareness of hunger and satiety cues.

“I always tell the kids: ‘If you love your body and want to take care of it, think of it as your favorite car, what kind of gas would they want to put in?’” she said.

Elliott, who made two All-Star teams in his 12-year NBA career, advises parents to encourage their children to be active early on.

“I tried everything. I played baseball. I ran track. Soccer. I tried a plethora of sports, and pretty soon my passion for basketball grew out of that,” he said.

Elliott and Zapata stay active and eat healthy so their children will, too.

“It all goes back to dealing with this situation as a family,” Zapata said. “It’s a good idea to change the family’s habits and attitudes toward diet and exercise.”

Panel: Creating Private-Public Partnerships



(L-R) Richard Black, Ivelisse Estrada, Kathryn Montgomery, Lionel Sosa, Amelie Ramirez, Rosemarie Truglio, Jennifer Harris and Terry Huang

Reducing Latino childhood obesity requires public-private partnerships with academics and the food, marketing and media industries, said Terry Huang, who directs obesity research at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

That's why Huang and *Salud America!* leaders brought together six experts in a summit "talk-show" to discuss how to create public-private partnerships to address obesity.

"Trust in partnerships is absolutely critical. Trust on the part of the industry, when we're working with a nonprofit

organization, we have to trust that their heart is in the right place," said Richard Black, Ph.D., vice president of nutrition at Kraft Foods Inc. "At the same time, those organizations have to trust that the food industry is interested in seeing a solution to the problem of obesity."

Black urged industry and academics to approach each other about public-private partnerships to change obesity trends among Latino children.

Change won't be easy, though.

Lionel Sosa, who formerly led one of the nation's largest Latino marketing companies, said advocates are "fighting the habits of a culture."

"We have to do it on a sustained basis," Sosa said. "We have too many of what somebody calls drive-by communications. We hit it once, and we think we've done it...nothing has an impact if it is not sustained almost on a daily basis."

Little research exists on how food marketing affects Latino youths, said Jennifer Harris, Ph.D., director of marketing initiatives at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University.

Rudd Center research shows that Latinos are more health conscious and aware of eating right. But that doesn't mean they do it, especially immigrants.

"As they become American, what they're finding is that their food habits are getting worse," Harris said. "The American culture is teaching their kids to drink

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Changing Latino Media/Marketing

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sodas and eat a lot of snack foods.”

Univision Communications, Inc., hopes to help change unhealthy habits.

The company makes its health campaigns culturally relevant to its diverse viewers, said Ivelisse Estrada, Univision’s senior vice president of corporate and community relations.

“We come from all different sorts of places. But still there are some values—family values—that are very strong,” Estrada said. “It’s very difficult to program for the whole country...but each station tailors their campaigns locally so that they address the needs of the local community and connect the parents and the children to the resources.”

Elmo is getting in the act, too.

PBS television show Sesame Street and its related bilingual educational campaign promote “healthy habits for life”—things like getting kids to move their bodies and “eat their colors” through the fruits and vegetables they pick.

The Sesame Workshop, which guides the show’s

educational curriculum, recently conducted a study that found that when Elmo endorses broccoli, children increasingly chose broccoli—although not at as high a level as when Elmo endorses a chocolate bar, said Rosemarie Truglio, Ph.D., the workshop’s vice president of education and research.

“So, as a company, we decided to strip our characters off of these not-so-great foods and use our characters strategically” so children pick healthier items, Truglio said.

But Sesame Street’s healthy programming isn’t being mimicked by other child-focused media, especially in digital arenas like Facebook, which are used more by Latino youths, said Kathryn Montgomery, Ph.D., a professor of public communication at American University.

Montgomery called for more independent marketing research not funded by the marketing industry and more sharing of existing market research.

“There needs to be some mechanisms for enabling the academic researchers, who are so behind the market [in research on advertising’s effects], to have access to some of [their research],” she said. “That can help inform the research agenda for scholars.”



Pilot Investigators

20 Salud America! pilot investigators to improve Latinos' lives

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through *Salud America!*, is funding 20 pilot grants for research on reducing and preventing obesity among Latino youths.

These 20 grantees, a mix of well-established and junior-level researchers from universities and community groups across the nation, each made individual presentations to the entire summit audience on Sept. 10.

To see these presentations, click on each investigator's name [here](#).

"These researchers will work closely with Latino populations to make a meaningful impact on policy and environmental changes that can help reverse childhood obesity," said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* "We were happy to showcase these promising researchers to our national audience."



Latino Family Health: *Salud America!* Pilot Investigators

- Dr. Shari Barkin**, Vanderbilt University Medical Center
"Increasing Access to Physical Activity and Use of Community Recreation Centers by Latino Families to Reduce Pediatric Obesity"
- Dr. Dina Castro**, University of North Carolina
"Growing Healthy Kids"
- Dr. Dharma Cortes**, University of Massachusetts Boston
"Esto es Mejor: Improving Food Purchasing Selection Among Low-Income, Spanish-Speaking Latinos Through Social Marketing Messages"
- Dr. Alexy Arauz Boudreau**, Massachusetts General Hospital
"A Family Approach to Addressing Lifestyle Decision in Obesity and Diabetes"
- Dr. Harris Huberman**, SUNY Downstate Medical Center
"Primeros Pasos Parenting Newsletters: A Low-Intensity Approach to Prevent Obesity in Latino Children"
- Dr. Nelda Mier**, Texas A&M Health Science Center
"Assessing the Built Environment in Colonias to Influence Policy Promoting Physical Activity in Mexican-American Children and Families"
- Dr. Carmen Nevarez**, Public Health Institute, California
"Evaluation of the Impact of a Menu-Labeling Program (Smart Menu/La Salud Tiene Sabor) in South Los Angeles"
- Dr. Javier Rosado**, Florida State University
"A Measurement of Obesity: BMI Screenings Across Two Settings"
- Dr. Myriam Torres**, U. of South Carolina Research Foundation
"Juntas Podemos [Together We Can]: Empowering Latinas To Shape Policy To Prevent Childhood Obesity"
- Dr. Miriam Vega**, Latino Commission on AIDS, New York
"La Familia en la Cocina"
- Dr. Angela Wiley**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
"Abriendo Caminos—Clearing the Path"

Communities and Schools: *Salud America!* Pilot Investigators

- Dr. Cristina Barroso**, University of Texas School of Public Health, Brownsville
"Body Image Perceptions Among Latinos"
- Dr. Robert Dudley**, Community Health Center, Connecticut
"Healthy Tomorrows for Latina Teens"
- Dr. Meizi He**, UT San Antonio
"Building a Healthy Temple—A Faith-Based Community Participatory Research Project for Preventing Childhood Obesity Among Latino Families"
- Dr. Rebecca London**, Stanford University School of Education
"Linking After-School Program Participation With Latino Youths' Obesity and Physical Fitness Outcomes"
- Dr. Norma Olvera**, University of Houston
"From Mothers to Daughters: A Physical Activity Dosage Intervention to Impact Adiposity"
- Dr. Monika Stodolska**, University of Illinois
"Crime, Physical Activity and Outdoor Recreation Among Latino Adolescents"
- Dr. Claudia Galindo**, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
"Young Latino Children's Weight Changes: Examination of Individual, Family and School Factors"
- Dr. Zan Gao**, University of Utah
"Integrating Dance Revolution to Promote Urban Latino School Children's Physical Health and Academic Achievement: Project GAME"
- Dr. Emma Sanchez**, University of California, San Francisco
"Informing Latino Childhood Obesity Prevention: The Role of Physical Education Policies in California"

Summit Fun

“Bienvenidos a San Antonio!”



Salud America! Director Amelie Ramirez chose this Spanish-infused welcome to kick off the program’s inaugural Scientific Summit at its opening reception Sept. 9, 2009, at the Institute of Texan Cultures.

The reception featured foods from Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Brazil. The Brackenridge High School Mariachi Band performed, and the Fandango Dance Troupe of San Antonio wowed spectators with Spanish Flamenco and Mexican Folklorico dances.

During the summit, attendees also enjoyed yoga sessions led by Nydia’s Yoga Therapy and a historical walking tour of San Antonio.

“Great strides were made in the effort to prevent Latino childhood obesity at our summit, and we were happy that participants got to sample the Latino culture, too,” Ramirez said.



Summit Views



“*Salud America!* is a network that aims to connect everyone in the field so that they can work together, share solutions more quickly and encourage increasing numbers of scientists to pursue environmental and policy solutions to obesity among Latino youth.

“In less than two years, *Salud* already has made its mark. More than 1,400 academics, researchers, community leaders and policy-makers are today part of its network. And this summer, *Salud* announced the recipients of its first research grants.

“So I think that *Salud*’s importance, just starting, is only going to grow. But I think its future, its importance to the nation, is signaled by our keynote speaker [Dr. Richard H. Carmona].”

—James Marks, M.D., M.P.H.,

Senior Vice President, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

“This difficulty with childhood obesity is very acute in our minds, a very compelling medical problem. And it’s why our university faculty and leadership have worked so hard to position ourselves as a premier provider of health education, of research and of clinical care to the constituents who we are privileged to serve. Our faculty, our students and our staff in all five of our professional schools have individual, dedicated projects aimed at correcting this problem.

“[*Salud America!*] is developing into a tremendous asset in stimulating awareness and research to reduce and prevent Latino childhood obesity.”

—William Henrich, M.D., M.A.C.P.,

President, UT Health Science Center at San Antonio



Media Coverage of the Summit

Because the media plays a key role in raising awareness about the importance of reducing and preventing childhood obesity among Latinos, several TV, radio and print outlets were invited to report on the Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit.

Here is a list of stories about the summit:

The [San Antonio Express-News](#) reported on the keynote speech by Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the United States. Health columnist Claudia Zapata, who also spoke at the summit, [Tweeted](#) about the event, too.

San Antonio TV station KSAT attended the summit and aired a [story](#) about childhood obesity among Latinos.

Several other San Antonio TV stations, including WOAI News and KWEX Univision, attended the event, reported on it and interviewed participants.

Also, San Antonio news radio stations WOAI (1200 AM) and KTSA (550 AM) attended the summit and reported stories about the event on the air.

The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio [previewed](#) and [recapped](#) the summit.

The [American Medical Network](#), [Minority News](#), [Newswise](#) and [dLife.com](#) also each previewed the summit.



The San Antonio affiliate of Univision interviewed Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the United States, after giving his keynote speech at the Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit.



Univision also interviewed Robert Wood Johnson Foundation official Dr. Laura Leviton at the Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit.

Agenda: Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit



Wednesday, September 9, 2009

6:15-9 p.m.

Summit Reception, Institute of Texan Cultures

Thursday, September 10, 2009

9-9:35 a.m.

Welcome/Meeting Overview

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., Director, *Salud America!*
William Henrich, M.D., M.A.C.P., President, UT Health
Science Center at San Antonio
James Marks, M.D., M.P.H., Senior Vice President,
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

9:35-10:35 a.m.

Keynote Speech

Richard H. Carmona, R.N., M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th
Surgeon General of the United States

10:55 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**Panel: “The Bottom Line: Generating Policy and Environmental
Change to Reduce Latino Childhood Obesity”**

Maya Rockeymoore Cummings, Ph.D., Director,
Leadership for Healthy Communities (moderator)
Jeffrey Levi, Ph.D., Executive Director, Trust for America’s
Health
George Flores, M.D., M.P.H., Senior Program Officer,
The California Endowment
Amanda Navarro, Dr.P.H. Associate Director, PolicyLink

12-2 p.m.

Lunch and Activity/Exercise Sessions

Activity 1: Yoga by Nydia’s Yoga Therapy
Activity 2: Nia Aerobics by The Synergy Studio
Activity 3: Historical Walking Tour by San Antonio Walks

2-2:30 p.m.

**Special Guests: “Sean Elliott and Claudia Zapata: Husband
and Wife Team Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity”**

Sean Elliott, Broadcaster/Former Player, San Antonio Spurs
Claudia Zapata, Health Columnist, *San Antonio
Express-News*

2:45-3:45 p.m.

**Break-Out Session 1: “Making Changes in Communities,
Academia, and Political Arenas to Curb Childhood Obesity”**

Robert Valdez, Ph.D., Director, RWJF Center for Health
Policy at the University of New Mexico (moderator)
John Govea, J.D., M.P.A., Senior Program Officer, RWJF
Christine Bozlak, M.P.H., Advocacy Program Manager,
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
Daniel Hale, M.D., Pediatrics, UT Health Science Center at
San Antonio

2:45-3:45 p.m.

**Break-Out Session 2: “Sitting on the Sidelines? Latinos, Sports
and Physical Activity”**

James Sallis, Ph.D., Director, Active Living Research
(moderator)
Hector Salazar, M.Ed., Program Manager, Playworks
Arthur Lopez, J.D., Founder and President, *Nadar Por
Vida*
Kay Morris, B.A., Founder and Director, Marathon Kids



Agenda: Inaugural *Salud America!* Scientific Summit

Thursday, September 10, 2009

2:45-3:45 p.m.

Break-Out Session 3: "Helping Schools Prevent and Reduce Obesity among Latino Children"

Elva Arredondo, Ph.D., San Diego State University (moderator)

Joan Brucha, M.P.H., Associate Director, Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Roberto Trevino, M.D., Director, Social & Health Research Center

Steven Kelder, Ph.D., M.P.H., Co-Director, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Advancement of Healthy Living, University of Texas School of Public Health

4-5:30 p.m.

Pilot Session 1: "Latino Family Health: *Salud America!* Pilot Investigators"

Patricia Chalela, Dr.P.H., Research Coordinator, *Salud America!* (moderator)

For list of pilots, see Page 17

4-5:30 p.m.

Pilot Session 2: "Communities and Schools: *Salud America!* Pilot Investigators"

Charlotte Pratt, Ph.D., National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (moderator)

For list of pilots, see Page 17

Friday, September 11, 2009

8:30-8:40 a.m.

Welcome Back/Recap/Special Guest Video

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., Director, *Salud America!*
Lance Armstrong, the Lance Armstrong Foundation

8:40-9:40 a.m.

Panel: "Childhood Obesity Policy-makers in Texas and Beyond"

Juliet Garcia, Ph.D., President, The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (moderator)

Mildred Thompson, M.S.W., Deputy Director, RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity

Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr., B.S.E., Texas State Senate

Arturo Vargas, M.Ed., Executive Director, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

10-11 a.m./11:15 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Concurrent Session 1: "What Makes Childhood Obesity Initiatives Successful?"

Deborah Parra-Medina, Ph.D., Professor, UT Health Science Center at San Antonio (moderator)

Baker Harrell, M.Ed., Founder and Executive Director, ACTIVE Life

James Raczynski, Ph.D., F.A.H.A., Professor and Founding Dean, Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Elizabeth Dodson, Ph.D., M.P.H., Research Assistant Professor, Prevention Research Center, Washington University, St. Louis



10-11 a.m./11:15 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Concurrent Session 2: "Building an Environment to Help Latinos Eat Healthier Foods and be More Active"

Luis Velez, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, UT Health Science Center at San Antonio (moderator)

Marcia Ory, Ph.D., M.P.H., Regent Professor, Texas A&M Health Science Center

Samuel Dennis Jr., Ph.D., M.L.A., Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Robert Garcia, J.D., Founder and Executive Director, The City Project

10-11 a.m./11:15 a.m.-12 p.m.

Concurrent Session 3: "What to Eat? Nutrition and the Latino Family"

Amy Yaroch, Ph.D., Executive Director, The Center for Human Nutrition (moderator)

Guadalupe Ayala, Ph.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor, San Diego State University

Glenn Flores, M.D., F.A.A.P., Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health, UT Southwestern Medical Center

Gail Woodward-Lopez, M.P.H., Associate Director, Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley

12:15-2:15 p.m.

Lunch and Panel: "Creating Public-Private Partnerships in Media for Research on Childhood Obesity Among Latinos"

Terry Huang, Director, Obesity Research Strategic Core, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (moderator)

Ivelisse Estrada, Senior Vice President of Corporate and Community Relations, Univision Communications Inc.

Rosemarie Truglio, Ph.D., Vice President of Education and Research for Sesame Workshop, Sesame Workshop

Lionel Sosa, Marketing Consultant, San Antonio

Richard Black, Ph.D., Vice President of Nutrition, Kraft Foods Inc.

Kathryn Montgomery, Ph.D., Professor, Public Communication Division, American University

Jennifer Harris, Ph.D., Director of Marketing Initiatives, The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University

2:15 p.m.

Summit Recap/Adjourn

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., Director, *Salud America!*

Salud America! Scientific Summit Attendee List

Salud America! Staff

Patricia Chalela
Courtney Denton
Cliff Despres
Kip Gallion
Kay Haverlah
Amelie G. Ramirez

Salud America! National Advisory Committee

Elva M. Arredondo
Marice Ashe
Laura K. Brennan
Nancy F. Butte
Robert Garcia
Lawrence W. Green
Robin Hamre
Terry Huang
Barbara Israel
Karen Kaphingst (for Mary Story)
Frank J. Penedo
Charlotte A. Pratt
Maya Rockeymoore Cummings
James F. Sallis
Mildred Thompson
Amy Yaroch

Salud America! Pilot Investigators

See Page 17

Salud America! Pilot Co-Investigators

Annya Hernandez
Mariah Lafleur
Margaret Samuels
Liz Schwarte
Judith Shinogle
Andrew Spieldenner

Salud America! Summit Speakers

See Pages 4-17

Attendees

Natalie Archer
Martha Baez
Hector Balcazar
Sandra K. Balderrama
Rose Ann Barajas
Stanley Bassin
Bryan Bayles
Ruth Berggren
John Berlanga
Lynda Billings
Joe Bonilla
Sue Bookspan
Carrie Jo Braden
Adelita Cantu
Albert Collazo
Victor Colman
Sharon Cooper
Sandra Covarrubias
Scott E. Crouter
Karen Weber Cullen
Sue Cunningham
Diane Dooley
Lori Dorfman
Diane Dowdy
Karl Eschbach
Alexandra Evans
Moshtagh Farokhi
Robert Ferrer
Aurora Flores
Alma Flores-Vela
John Foreyt
Thomas Forsthuber
Gabriela Garcia
Josephine Garza
Alberto Gedissman

Victor German
Adela Gonzalez
Francelis Gonzalez
Hector Gonzalez
Martin Gonzalez
Sandy Griffith
Fernando Guerra
Gilbert Handal
Brian Herman
Daniel C. Hughes
Carmen Isasi
Eddy Andres Jara
Jenna Kirschenman
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Deanna Landron-Reyes
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Steven Marcus
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Stephanie McClain
Joseph McCormick
Karen Meaney
Veronica Melvin
Anne V. Millard
Cynthia Mojica
Leticia Montiel
Daisy Morales-Campos
Oscar J. Munoz
Mario Munoz
Miranda Muzina
Jose Pagan
Deborah Parra-Medina
Gianna Perez Gomez
Debbie Quinones

Lourdes Rangel
Anne Rath Rentfro
Susana Razo
Elizabeth Reifsnider
TyAnn Robinson
Marlene Rodriguez
Carmen Román-Shriver
Kara Ryan
Sandra San Miguel
Dirk G. Schroeder
Joey Shanahan
Joseph R. Sharkey
Brent James Shriver
Sandy J. Slater
Michelle Smith
Melanie Stone
Lucina Suarez
Juan Tarango
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Darcy Thompson
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Ray Tsai
Ximena Urrutia-Rojas
Adolfo Valadez
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Angelica Valle
Linda Valencia
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Lyonel Vela
Luis Velez
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Paula Winkler
Cynthia Wittenburg
David Wittenburg
Sylvie Whitehead
Zenong Yin

About the Summit Report

The Summit Report was produced by *Salud America!* Please send comments to despres@uthscsa.edu. Visit *Salud America!* at www.salud-america.org.

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