Forum Touts Innovative Ways to Tackle Latino Obesity

SAN ANTONIO—The 2nd Annual SALSI Research Forum: Latino Obesity highlighted innovative strategies and programs from The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) and UT San Antonio (UTSA) researchers and community advocates to reduce the obesity epidemic among Texas Latinos.

Nearly 75% of Latinos were overweight or obese in Texas as of 2009, said State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter at the forum, held May 10, 2011.

That’s why Latino obesity-focused research and programs are so vital, officials say.

“The researchers and leaders present at the forum are doing working at ‘ground zero’ of the Latino obesity epidemic in Texas,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at UTHSCSA, the team that coordinated the forum with UTSA. The forum was made possible by the San Antonio Life Science Institute (SALSI). “It’s important to highlight these efforts to gain better knowledge of what works best to encourage healthier lifestyles among Latinos.”

VIDEO: UT San Antonio Researchers:
- Dr. Zenong Yin on an early-childhood healthy lifestyles program in daycares
- Dr. Meizi He on educating Latinos on healthy lifestyles via faith-based groups
- Dr. Lesli Biediger-Friedman on the evaluation of San Antonio’s restaurant recognition program for healthy menus
- Dr. Gayle Nicoll on architectural and environmental changes to enhance walkability and physical activity

VIDEO: UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Researchers:
- Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina on her “Be Fit with Friends” project that is testing an intervention to increase physical activity among Latina girls ages 11-14
Dr. Dan Hughes on a randomized controlled trial testing the effectiveness of comprehensive exercise, Yoga exercise and general exercise on cancer survivors

Dr. Adelita G. Cantú on “Muevete USA,” which trains Latino nurses to steer Latino families to health

Dr. Dan Hale on childhood obesity in South Texas

**VIDEO: San Antonio Community Leaders:**

- Maggie Thompson on the city’s efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles via its Communities Putting Prevention to Work program
- Louis Lopez on the YMCA’s program to respond to obesity-related illnesses
- Dr. Peter Wald on obesity interventions for young children
- Kate Rogers on H-E-B’s multifaceted health promotion efforts for 2011

Also, Mark Erickson, vice president-dean of culinary education at the Culinary Institute of America, which has a campus in San Antonio, **talked** about culinary-focused research areas, such as culinary ethnography, sensory perception and flavor development, and behavioral economics of food, especially among the Latino populations.

“[Latinos are] a group we’re uniquely interested in because it’s a group at risk,” Erickson said. “It would be so much better for us to be able to address behaviors before they began rather than trying to correct them after they’ve already cemented into habits.”

Find out more about the forum at [http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu/curr_proj_salsi_forum.html](http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu/curr_proj_salsi_forum.html).

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**San Antonio Life Sciences Institute (SALSI):** SALSI, approved by state lawmakers in 2001 in coordination with The University of Texas System Board of Regents, drives the expansion of new scientific knowledge throughout Texas and the world. It enhances the research, teaching and service missions of The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). This collaboration enables joint doctoral programs and research projects; initiatives that stimulate the growth of the biomedical and biotechnology industries in San Antonio; etc. Find out more at [http://utsalsi.org/about.php](http://utsalsi.org/about.php).

**The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA):** UTHSCSA, one of the country’s leading health sciences universities, ranks in the top 3 percent of all institutions worldwide receiving National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. Research and other sponsored program activity totaled a record $259 million in fiscal year 2009. The university’s schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, health professions and graduate biomedical sciences have produced 26,000 graduates. The $744 million operating budget supports eight campuses in San Antonio, Laredo, Harlingen and Edinburg. For more information, visit [www.uthscsa.edu](http://www.uthscsa.edu).
**The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA):** UTSA is one of the fastest growing higher education institutions in Texas and one of nine academic universities and six health institutions in the UT System. As a multicultural institution, UTSA aims to be a national research university providing access to educational excellence and preparing citizen leaders for the global environment. UTSA serves more than 30,300 students in 65 bachelor’s, 49 master’s and 21 doctoral degree programs in the colleges of Architecture, Business, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Honors, Liberal and Fine Arts, Public Policy, Sciences and Graduate School. Founded in 1969, UTSA is an intellectual and creative resource center and a socioeconomic development catalyst for Texas and beyond. Find more information online at [www.utsa.edu/today](http://www.utsa.edu/today).

**Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at UTHSCSA:** The IHPR investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among Latinos in South Texas and the nation. Founded in 2006, the IHPR is based at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio with a satellite office in Harlingen, Texas. The IHPR uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve the health of those at a disadvantage. Visit the IHPR online at [http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu](http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu).