New $2.9M Study to Help Obese Latino Kids Eat Better, Play More

A new obesity management program will use family counseling, text messages and newsletters to control weight and spark healthier eating and physical activity habits in obese/overweight Latino kids, thanks to a five-year $2.9 million federal grant awarded to researchers at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Researchers will develop and test the six-month program among 230 child-parent pairs in three pediatric clinics of the University Health System. Half the child-parent pairs will get in-clinic counseling on how to make healthy changes. The other half will get the same in-clinic counseling—plus phone counseling and culturally tailored text messages and newsletters to reinforce changes suggested by counseling.

“We believe kids in the more intensive group will significantly improve their body composition, increase their physical activity levels, consume more fruits and vegetables and fewer sugary drinks, and decrease their sedentary habits, like watching TV,” said Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, the study’s principal investigator and a professor at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center.

About 39% of Latino kids ages 2-19 are overweight/obese, compared to 32% of all kids.

Research indicates that Latino kids tend to have more limited access to physical activity options and healthy food, contributing to obesity and related health issues, like diabetes.

Parra-Medina’s new obesity management program will tackle many of these factors.

Counseling will focus on consuming more fruits and vegetables and less sugar-sweetened beverages, limiting screen time and being active at least one hour a day. Strategies to improve eating habits include eating breakfast daily, eating more meals at home, eating meals as a family most days, and allowing the child to self-regulate his/her meals.

Parra-Medina and her colleagues will develop content for culturally tailored newsletters and text messages to reinforce those concepts. Dr. David Akopian of UT San Antonio will implement the text messaging system.
Breast cancer survivors can now join a new study to learn how certain foods may reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

The study, **Rx for Better Breast Health**, is funded by Susan G. Komen for the Cure and led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Breast cancer survivors who participate will be randomly assigned to one of two groups.

Each group will get different cancer nutrition tools, possibly six cooking demonstrations by **Chef Iverson Brownell**, who creates innovative culinary recipes that taste great and promote health.

Call 210-562-6579 to see if you qualify.

We want to teach survivors the importance of a dietary plan full of foods with disease-fighting properties.

The dietary choices people make can positively or negatively influence inflammation, the process your body uses to protect itself in response to infection or injury, said Dr. Michael Wargovich, study co-principal investigator and professor of molecular medicine at the Health Science Center.

Although inflammation is a vital part of the healing process of wounds and infections, if inflammation becomes chronic, it actually causes illness, like cancer.

Some beneficial anti-inflammatory foods are deep marine fish, dark leafy green vegetables, bright multi-colored vegetables, black and green teas, and many spices and herbs.

“Science has taught us that eating these types of foods can benefit health, and we want to see how a diet of these foods can impact breast cancer survivors,” Wargovich said.

To join the study, breast cancer survivors must be ages 18-75 and meet additional criteria.

Gift cards will be given to participants who complete the study’s three assessments—including surveys, blood work, and other measurements—at the CTRC.

Other Health Science Center faculty involved are: Rong Li, PhD; Alan Holden, PhD; Daniel Carlos Hughes, PhD; Sagar Ghosh, PhD; and Dorothy Long Parma, MD.

**Fun Facts**

**Hometown:** Houston  
**Family:** Mom, aunt, five cousins, eight nieces/nephews  
**Hobbies:** Reading, watching sports (soccer, football especially watching my Aggies), running/yoga, and cooking/baking  
**Favorite food(s):** Pretty much any homemade Mexican food, especially **albóndigas** (I only enjoy my aunt’s recipe)  
**Favorite movie(s):** *Life is Beautiful*  
**Favorite book(s):** *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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**Director’s Corner**

**From IHPR Director**  
**Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez**

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**IHPR Staff Profile:**  
**Arely Perez**

Aarely Perez loves to step outside her comfort zone.

In college, she studied and enjoyed kinesiology—the study of human movement—but wasn’t as familiar with how it translated to the health of the community.

So, as a graduate student at UT San Antonio, she got jobs in the labs of Drs. Meizi He and Zenong Yin, where she learned all about public health and coordinated studies of local programs to improve nutrition and reduce obesity in child care centers.

“I became passionate about improving people’s health, thanks to both Drs. He and Yin, who gave me great opportunities to expand my knowledge and skills,” Perez said.

Today Perez is applying her passion for health as a researcher at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

She coordinates the IHPR’s **Redes En Acción** national research network on Latino cancer.

She also serves as a patient navigator and helps coordinate a team of navigators who guide patients through the complex medical system and provide a variety of support.

“In this field, we are all essential. Everyone plays a role in trying to reach the same goal: Educate individuals who need it the most, especially minorities, to improve our community,” Perez said. “That’s what motivates me.”

She continues to leave her comfort zone to try new things.

“There's so much you can accomplish and continue learning—presentations, outreach, grant writing and publications, coordinating,” she said. “It keeps you busy and at the same time you never stop learning.”
minority women have low breast cancer screening rates.

Even if they are screened, they delay confirmatory diagnosis and treatment because of costs, cultural and language issues, competing responsibilities, and more.

That’s why Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, professor and director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, is offering the Navegando Salud patient navigator program, which trains bilingual, bicultural community health workers to offer breast cancer screenings, education and other services to women in South Texas.

Navegando Salud just received a one-year, $100,000 grant from the Avon Foundation.

The grant was among 10 announced at the 12th Annual Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in Houston on April 13, 2014.

“We’re honored to receive this grant, which will help us go a long way in generating the best breast care possible for women and their families,” said Ramirez.

Patient navigation has proven to remove barriers to screening, promote timely diagnosis and treatment, and improve outcomes for medically underserved cancer patients, Ramirez said.

Navegando Salud aims to:

• provide community outreach and education in high-need areas to promote cancer screening and healthy behaviors to reduce women’s breast cancer risk.

“Our navigators will tailor their services to each patient’s needs to improve patients’ quality of life and satisfaction with the breast health care received during their cancer journey,” Ramirez said.

Find out about all 10 grants here.

Others from IHPR faculty and staff involved in Navegando Salud are: Patricia Chalela, DrPH, assistant professor; and Sandra Costilla and Armida Flores, patient navigators.
Community Health Educators Help Racial/Ethnic Cancer Survivors

The number of U.S. cancer survivors is rising. But the post-cancer journey can be tough, especially for Latinos and other minorities, who face worry about recurring disease, hard decisions regarding follow-up care, lack of emotional support and finances.

That’s why the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has a national outreach network of community health educators (CHEs) stationed at NCI-funded agencies to help patients and their families receive survivorship support, according to an NCI article.

The NCI article showcases several examples of CHEs in action.

The report includes Sandra San Miguel de Majors, a CHE with the NCI’s Reden En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network, based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

San Miguel started Breast Friends Forever (BFF), a unique support group for San Antonio-area breast cancer survivors in their 20s and 30s.

BFF meetings are held once a month to help these young women bond with each other, receive emotional support, and learn more about breast health from expert speakers. The speakers—oncologists, social workers, and CHEs—often speak about cancer treatments, body image, fertility, personal relationships, and other quality-of-life challenges unique to this age group.

“We want young survivors to build positive relationships with other survivors their age in a fun and educational setting, and to improve their quality of life during and after breast cancer,” says San Miguel de Majors.

Learn more about BFF here and other CHE activities via the NCI.

Find survivorship resources here.

IHPR Researchers Welcomes Newborn

Cynthia Mojica, an assistant professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the IHPR, and her husband, Luis De Luna, welcomed their second child, 7-pound, 6-ounce Liam David, at 8:09 a.m., Friday, March 28, 2014. Liam joins sister Loren.

IHPR researcher Sandra San Miguel de Majors (second from left) started the Breast Friends Forever support group for young Latina breast cancer survivors.

Several IHPR researchers joined a team to raise and donate $250 to the Y Partners of the Westside Family YMCA. Team members included: Deborah Parra-Medina, Laura Esparza, Zenong Yin, Celeste Medina, Laura Zepeda and Katherine Velasquez. The IHPR volunteers and/or partners with YMCA of Greater San Antonio on several prevention programs including Y Living and Siclovía.
Èxito! Program Helps Latinos Seek Doctoral Degrees, Research Careers

Èxito! Grad: Monica Aguilar
Downey, Calif.

With a Belizean mother who always cared for others, offered support, and excelled in a health profession, Monica Aguilar was motivated to blaze her own trail to improve the lives of others.

Aguilar got her start in health with a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in health science.

Today she has gone on to serve as a community health educator, research assistant, and data manager for health education and health promotion projects, and now she is pursuing a master's in public health degree at California State University Long Beach.

Aguilar applied for the Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training program—which offers a five-day summer institute and internships to encourage master's-level students and health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a cancer research career—to increase her expertise in health disparities research.

She felt the program would be a first step in transitioning from a master's program to a doctoral program.

Indeed, adding to the plethora of personal public health experience she already had, Aguilar said the tools and information provided throughout the Éxito! Summer Institute enhanced her resources and answered some of her questions about applying to a doctoral program.

“The [Èxito!] Summer Institute is a great program that has provided me with the tools and motivation to pursue a doctorate in public health,” Aguilar said.

Èxito! Grad: Wendy Ramirez
South Gate, Calif.

Wendy Ramirez uses her outgoing personality to put her own stamp on improving public health.

She already has a grant for a research project, she has presented data at several professional conferences, and she hopes to offer support and a role model to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth.

Ramirez, who has a bachelor's degree in health education and is currently working on her master's in public health degree at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), is a graduate research fellow with the NCLR/CSULB Center for Latino Community.

Ramirez decided to apply for the Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training program—which offers a five-day summer institute and internships to encourage master's-level students and health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a cancer research career—to better understand how research can directly change cancer outcomes and to better understand the spread of cancer in certain communities.

After attending the Éxito! Summer Institute, Ramirez said she has increased interest in pursuing a doctoral degree and now had an expanded base of tool with which to apply to a doctoral program.

“After attending Éxito! I now feel confident that I can apply and send a strong application and get into a PhD program,” Ramirez said. “Through the Éxito! program I have learned the personal barriers I may encounter and how to overcome them. It was by far one of the best summer programs I have attended and the staff/mentors are amazing.”
Physical activity is “a powerful tool for managing weight and preventing serious health problems” like diabetes and certain cancers, according to a new article on Page 18 of PeakLife SA Magazine.

The article advises on how much physical activity is enough and how people can get more activity on a regular basis, such as:

- Being an active living champion for your family, like walking or biking to school or the store;
- Get out and try something new, like walking trails; and
- Spread the word, like organizing an office health challenge or bringing the need for safer routes to local decision-makers.

The article, written by Laura Esparza, a researcher at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, also urges people to get involved with the Active Living Council of San Antonio, Texas.

The Active Living Council is a community coalition and Mayor’s Fitness Council committee focused on ensuring every local resident has access to safe places and healthy programs for physical activity.

Learn about the group here or on Facebook, and see how the group was formed.

New $2.9M Study to Help Obese Latino Kids Eat Better, Play More

The team will measure the impact of the program on body composition, insulin, glucose and cholesterol levels, and health behavior changes, like fruit and vegetable consumption.

“We think this will become an effective way to reduce and prevent obesity in Hispanic families,” Parra-Medina said.

The study is funded by the National Institutes of Health’s Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development.

Others from IHPR faculty and staff involved in the study are Cynthia Mojica, PhD, assistant professor, and Laura Esparza, MS, project coordinator. Others from the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio involved in the study are: Carisse Orsi, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics, and Yuanyuan Liang, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology and biostatistics.
Hispanics live longer than other population groups, even though they face higher rates of blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity, according to the largest-ever study of Latino health.

The federal study, called the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL), is a multi-city epidemiological study collected information on the health issues, risk factors, and lifestyle habits that impact this population.

The study has followed more than 16,000 Hispanic adults from Chicago, San Diego, Miami and the Bronx since 2008.

Some of its initial national results include:

- 80% of Hispanic men and 71% of women had at least one adverse risk factor for heart disease (i.e., high cholesterol/blood pressure, obesity, diabetes or smoking).
- The percentage with obesity was high among all Hispanic/Latino groups.
- Among younger participants few had diabetes, but among participants ages 65-74 almost half had diabetes.
- About half of the men and women with diabetes had their diabetes under control.
- Men were more likely than women to eat enough fruits and vegetables each day.
- Women, especially those ages 45-64, were more likely to report symptoms of depression than men.

“This study is so important because the Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest growing population in the U.S., and we need to know and document their health problems to better serve their health-care needs going forward,” said Dr. Martha Daviglus, director of the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Institute for Minority Health Research and principal investigator for the Chicago portion of the study. “This study is the foundation for those efforts.”

The study is ongoing for another six years.

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**Latino News Tweets**

Follow the IHPR’s Twitter feed, [@SaludToday](https://twitter.com/SaludToday) for all the latest news in Latino health, like:

**Cancer**
- Colon cancer screening isn’t pleasant, but can be a lifesaver in the Latino community
- Study: Mailing free Colon Cancer tests to Latino Patients’ Homes Boosted Screening Rates by 40%
- CDC Study: In Hispanic men, Lung Cancer Passed Colorectal Cancer as 2nd-most Common Type
- Minority share of U.S. cancer trials “woefully inadequate” (just 1.3% for both Hispanics & blacks)

**Other Conditions**
- Tobacco more likely to be sold at pharmacies in poor and Latino communities
- Tuberculosis Rates Hit Hispanics, Asians the Hardest
- For Mexican Americans, Surviving a Stroke is Not the Hardest Part
- Death by Machismo: Latin Americans Suffering from HIV/AIDS Due to Fear of Being Labelled as Gay
- Great Story: Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health—and How to Fix Them
- For Latino Kids with Autism, Additional Barriers Exist
Latin and other minority students have worse educational opportunities than white students, according to new federal data, USA Today reports.

Differences include fewer advanced math and science course offerings, harsher discipline, and less-qualified teachers for minority students of various racial/ethnic groups, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection survey, which focuses on all 97,000 U.S. public schools.

Among the findings reported by USA Today:

- Among high schools serving the highest percentage of African-American and Latino students, one in three don't offer a single chemistry course, and one in four don't offer a math course more advanced than Algebra I.
- In schools that offer “gifted and talented” programs, African-American and Latino students represent 40 percent of students but only 26 percent of those in such programs.
- African-American, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native students attend schools with higher concentrations of first-year teachers than white students.
- Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be suspended as those without disabilities.
- African-American students are suspended and expelled at a rate more than three times as high as white students (16 percent vs. 5 percent).

“This data collection shines a clear, unbiased light on places that are delivering on the promise of an equal education for every child and places where the largest gaps remain,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in a press statement. “In all, it is clear that the United States has a great distance to go to meet our goal of providing opportunities for every student to succeed.”

Learn more about the data report here.

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Latin News Tweets

Follow the IHPR's Twitter feed, @SaludToday for all the latest news in Latino health, like:

**Healthy Lifestyles**

- Search #GrowingHealthyChange on Twitter to See Healthy Changes

**Care Issues**

- Diabetic Retinopathy Disparities may be related to Insurance
- Report: 1 in 49 White Moms, 1 in 200 Hispanic or Black Moms Deliver Outside Hospitals
- Dr. Elena Rios: Technology Offers Solutions for Patients and Docs

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Demographics

- CDC: 1,700 babies a week born to young moms (esp. Hispanics)
- Research Scratches Surface of Complex Hispanic Millennials
- Report: 4 of 5 Low-Income Students Cannot Read
- Fast-growing Hispanic market tough to tap
- Poli: Hispanic Moms are Social, Mobile
- Author: Question of Race Not Simple for Mexican Americans
‘Lifelines’ to Help Reduce Cancer among Latino and Other Minority Populations

Hispanics suffer higher rates of certain cancers, including cervical cancer and childhood leukemia, than other groups.

That is one of the reasons behind Lifelines, a series of cancer education articles, videos and audio files from the National Cancer Institute’s Multicultural Media Outreach (MMO) program.

The Lifelines series, in both English and Spanish, addresses cancer prevention, treatment, survivorship, health disparities, clinical trials and other cancer-related topics for African-American, Hispanic, Asian American and Pacific Islander and Native American populations.

- Lifelines Videos feature videos on a wide range of topics, including colorectal, breast, and cervical cancer, tobacco use and lung cancer, complementary and alternative medicine, and nutrition and cancer risk.
- Lifelines Audio Files are a series of 60-second audio segments on cancer topics that can be downloaded and broadcast for free on ethnic radio outlets or posted on websites that reach minority audiences.
- Lifelines Profiles feature a behind-the-scenes look at the people behind the science, like global health researcher Jorge Gomez.

Check out Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio in a Lifelines video about the need for Latino participation in clinical trials and a Lifelines audio piece, Cancer Care and the Affordable Care Act (Hispanics).

Stay up with the Lifelines series by following @NCImcMedia on Twitter or YouTube.

Bilingual ‘Parent Toolkit’ Now Tracks Students’ Health/Wellness Benchmarks

NBC News is debuting a “health and wellness” section of its bilingual Parent Toolkit.

The Parent Toolkit, available in English and Spanish, is a website and mobile app that helps parents navigate their children’s academic development, personal growth, and now health and wellness milestones.

The goals of the toolkit, which is sponsored by Pearson, are to give parents a clear understanding of what is expected of their children at each step in their academic and health journey, and to provide a comprehensive set of tips and tools to help parents engage in and monitor their children’s academic development and health.

The new health and wellness section includes: grade-by-grade recommendations for physical activity, nutrition, and sleep based on national standards; age-appropriate tips for parents to increase exercise, healthy eating, and adequate sleep for their growing children; and printable infographics to guide parents in making healthy choices when reading nutrition labels and grocery shopping.

Visit the site at ParentToolkit.com.

Funding

Grant Roundup

The following organizations have open research funding opportunities or lists:

- The U.S. Office of Minority Health
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure
- AACR
- NIH Obesity Grants
- NCCOR Obesity Grants

Ongoing Events

Seminars in Translational Research

Seminars in Translational Research (STRech) unite investigators from The UT Health Science Center and UTSA in basic, clinical and social sciences to highlight the stages of the scientific translation of research discoveries.

CancerCare Workshops

CancerCare, in partnership with Redes En Acción, which is led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, will offer free workshops on a variety of issues. Register here.
Video Roundup – Click on the images below to view the video for each.

**Latino Kids Need Salud Heroes. Can You Step Up?**

**Share Your Story of Change**

**Latina Mom Helps Quadriplegic Friend Complete Triathlon**

**Latino Youth Struggle Toward Healthier Lifestyles; Hope to Inspire Change**

**Background**

- Cervical cancer incidence rates higher for Hispanic women in Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) compared to the state and nation.¹ ²
- Studies show Hispanic parents are accepting of the vaccine; but uptake still low
  - Initiation rates are 58% in Texas and 65% in US³
  - Completion rates are 35% in Texas and 42% in US³

**Only 58% of Latinas in South Texas Get the HPV Vaccine**

**Why Get the HPV Vaccine? (Spanish)**

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**About the E-newsletter**

This E-newsletter is produced quarterly by the Institute for Health Promotion Research. Please send news items or story ideas to IHPR@uthscsa.edu.

*Editor:* Cliff Despres  
*Design:* Jeffrey Heinke Design

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) is part of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the School of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. The IHPR is supported in part by the Health Science Center and its Cancer Therapy & Research Center and Regional Academic Health Center. The IHPR investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and other chronic diseases among the populations of South Texas, Texas, and the nation.

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