2nd Annual SALSI Research Forum

Latino Obesity Report

Sponsored by
San Antonio Life Sciences Institute

Hosted by the Institute for Health Promotion Research, The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio
The 2nd Annual SALSI Research Forum: Latino Obesity on May 10, 2011, highlighted innovative strategies and programs to reduce obesity among Texas Latinos from researchers at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) and UT San Antonio (UTSA) and community advocates.

Nearly 75% of Latinos were overweight or obese in Texas as of 2009.

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

“The researchers and leaders present at the forum are 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. Dr. Ramirez also moderated the forum.

“It’s important to highlight these efforts to better understand what works to encourage Latinos’ healthier lifestyles.”

The forum was made possible by the San Antonio Life Science Institute (SALSI).

Find out more about the forum here.
Texas: Changing Demographics and Obesity

More than 55% of the state’s population is expected to be Hispanic by 2040, a number that already has grown from 32% in 2000 to 38% in 2010.

Unfortunately, Texas Hispanics’ waistlines are projected to grow larger, too, in the midst of this population boom, said Texas State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter.

“The state’s looking at this tremendous growth in obesity that’s largely being driven by the growth of the Hispanic population and the fact that obesity is more prevalent among Hispanics,” Potter said.

Today, 74% of Texas Hispanics are obese or overweight, compared to 71% of blacks and 64% of whites. The number of obese Hispanics in Texas is expected to rise from 4.7 million now to 14.7 million in 2040, by far the largest increase among population groups.

This growth means an enormous uptick in diabetes, too, Potter said.

“[The Institute] doesn’t generate the science, but convenes people who have the ability to influence change and bring information... to those who can use it to make a difference,” said Erickson, who oversees the Institute’s chef training programs and its branch campuses in St. Helena, Calif., San Antonio, Texas, and Singapore.

For example, 10 years ago, the Institute partnered with Harvard to start a conference for menu gurus. This helped McDonald’s, SUBWAY, Aramark and others improve nutrition by targeting trans fats, sodium, etc.

The Institute later launched a conference focused on finding out the best ways to create incentives for farmers to produce more beans, broccoli and other specialty crops. Another focused on helping food operations make fresh produce more available.

There’s even a conference to teach doctors how to cook healthy.

“Once we’ve been able to change [doctors’] behaviors, they are more likely to be active and participate in changing the behaviors of their patients with cooking, rather than pharmacologic or surgery or those more radical treatments,” Erickson said.

The Institute also wants chefs to help make school lunches more nutritious.

That’s why they have recently teamed up with the National Restaurant Association to sponsor a Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids summit in San Antonio. The summit united 200 diverse professionals from around the country—including Salud America! and Institute for Health Promotion Research Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, among others. Participants discussed and debated a wide range of issues impacting the quality and flavor of foods for children, especially among Latino kids.

“[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.”
UTSA Researchers:
Tackling Obesity from All Angles

Zenong Yin – Míranos
Is it possible to indoctrinate pre-school students— for life—with healthy behaviors via positive interactions with their parents, teachers and school workers? That’s what Míranos is trying to find out.
Míranos, led by Dr. Zenong Yin, professor of health and kinesiology at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), is an obesity and diabetes intervention in San Antonio Head Start daycare centers that teach primarily Mexican-American children. The program employs the concept that kids will develop healthy behaviors if provided an interactive, supporting learning environment at school and home. Preliminarily, Míranos has improved children’s nutrition and physical activity attitudes; helped parents give their children more fruit and less TV at home; helped daycare staff adopt healthier lifestyles; and demonstrated its feasibility to be integrated into daycares.

Meizi He – Health Temples
Dr. Meizi He, an associate professor of health and kinesiology at UTSA, develops culturally sensitive behavioral interventions to prevent and treat obesity and related nutritional disorders in school, home and community settings.
One of her projects, “Building a Healthy Temple,” aims to shed light on the development of innovative and effective obesity prevention programs for Latino families grounded in supportive faith-based communities. She already has gathered insights from Latino church leaders and congregations in San Antonio. Preliminarily, she has found that church leaders and members perceive a linkage between faith and health, and that they perceive a need for culturally sensitive obesity prevention.

Lesli Biediger-Friedman – ¡Por Vida!
Dr. Lesli Biediger-Friedman, assistant professor of health and kinesiology at UTSA, is evaluating San Antonio’s restaurant recognition program. The program, launch in 2010 and called ¡Por Vida!, aims to help adults and children make healthier food choices by identifying menu items that meet certain nutritional standards.
Dr. Biediger-Friedman and her team are doing environmental assessments of participating restaurants, tracking sales data of healthier menu items, surveying patrons and interviewing restaurant personnel.

Gayle Nicoll – Active Design
Dr. Gayle Nicoll, chair of architecture at UTSA, is all about “active design.”
Active design encourages use of stairs, active transportation, creation of or improved access to places for physical activity and creation of more walkable public spaces.
Dr. Nicoll helped publish the Active Design Guidelines, which provide architects and urban designers with a manual of strategies for creating healthier buildings, streets, and urban spaces. Guidelines are based on the latest academic research and best practices in the field.
This provides an important foundation for building design initiatives that combat chronic disease and promote health through more active lifestyles.
Deborah Parra-Medina – BFF and NEST

Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, professor at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), heads two projects to address obesity in Latino children. The first, “Be Fit with Friends (BFF),” aims to give Latina Girl Scouts ages 11-14 many unique options to overcome barriers to physical activity.

BFF, designed with input from girls and community leaders, teaches girls the basics of physical activity and offers tools to get girls active at troop meetings, conducts weekend activities, and sends girls motivational text messages.

The second, “Nutrition & Exercise Start Today! (NEST),” features family-centered counseling and monthly telephone counseling calls to increase healthy lifestyles among Hispanic families with an obese or overweight child.

So far, NEST has helped children maintain their weight more so than the control group.

Dan Hughes – IMPACT

Which activities benefit breast cancer survivors more: Comprehensive exercise, yoga, or general exercise? That’s what “Improving Mind and Physical Activity (IMPACT),” led by Dr. Dan Hughes, assistant professor at the IHPR at UTHSCSA, is trying to find out.

The randomized controlled trial is testing the effectiveness of comprehensive exercise, Yoga exercise and general exercise on breast cancer survivors’ exercise behaviors, fitness variables, quality of life and other factors.

Adelita Cantu – Muevete USA

Who better than Latinos to teach other Latinos healthy lifestyles? Muevete (Move) USA will train Latino student nurses in five cities across the U.S.—Chicago, Phoenix, San Antonio, Edinburg, Texas, and Brownsville, Texas—to teach Latino children and their families skills to make healthy choices to reduce obesity.

Dr. Adelita G. Cantu, assistant professor of family and community health systems at UTHSCSA, is directing the community service-learning portion of the program.

More than 30 student nurses will target Latino children in grades one to six, adolescents ages 13-17, and adults. Target areas will be zip codes of lower-income families.

Dan Hale – South Texas Child Obesity

Dr. Daniel Hale, professor of pediatrics at UTHSCSA, leads the National Children’s Study Center in South Texas.

The seven-site national study, which has three control and three intervention schools at each site, features integrated campaigns involving school cafeterias, physical education, social marketing, education, parents, and community newsletters.

Preliminarily, the intervention has decreased the percentage of children with a body mass index classified as overweight or obese.

Another study, “Diabetes Risk-Reduction via Community-based Telelink,” demonstrates the non-inferiority of a weight-management program delivered by telelink to the same program delivered face-to-face in San Antonio’s Harlandale school district.
Latino Obesity Report

Community Leaders:
Programs Encourage Healthy Lifestyles

Maggie Thompson – CPPW

It’s a staggering sum—$15.6 million. That’s how much the City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District received in federal funding for its Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) program to focus on reducing and preventing obesity in Bexar County.

The money is helping increase physical activity, improve access to nutritious food, improve the man-made environment, and set up a structure to plan, implement and evaluate changes, said Maggie Thompson, CPPW program manager.

Change already is starting to occur. This includes neighborhood-based physical activity groups; healthy school programs and P.E.; outdoor fitness stations at parks and libraries; the ¡Por Vida! restaurant recognition program; complete streets policies; and an SAbalance campaign featuring a Website and Twitter and Facebook pages.

Louis Lopez – Y Living

In response to the overwhelming increase of chronic illness caused by obesity and lack of physical activity, Louis Lopez of the YMCA of Greater San Antonio helped create and implement “Y Living.”

The program aims to increase total wellness, reduce and prevent chronic illness caused by obesity and sedentary habits, and develop healthy family lifestyles.

The 12-week program features educational sessions, physical activity led by YMCA wellness coaches, family field trips, and a family retreat at a camp.

Surveys show that participating families had more than a 10% increase in eating breakfast, water intake, eating as a family, walking a mile a day, exercising three times a week and a preference for engaging in physical activity rather than watch TV.

Families also had a 10% decrease in consumption of sugary beverages.

Peter Wald – Early Intervention

The San Antonio Medical Foundation historically has worked to increase the amount of land and resources to improve healthcare and community well-being.

Its new project targets early childhood obesity prevention.

The project is partnering with KLRN to create 10 multi-media segments to show to kindergarten, 1st- and 2nd-grade students to increase their healthy behaviors, said Dr. Peter Wald, vice president, enterprise medical director at USAA.

The segments will feature animation, live action and music and address multiple learning styles in English and Spanish.

Teachers can weave these segments into their in-class curriculum or between classes via the KLRN Connect video clip service, which is available to all San Antonio schools.

Kate Rogers – H-E-B Health and Wellness

H-E-B, Texas’ largest food retailer and largest private employer, has a sparkling 80% participation rate in its company wellness program.

But employees weren’t getting healthier.

So H-E-B launched new hands-on programs to help employees change behaviors and get healthy, said Kate Rogers, director of partner communications and culture at H-E-B.

This includes: a “Healthy at H-E-B” handbook on basics of sound nutrition and physical activity; “Slim Down Showdown,” a comprehensive lifestyle intervention styled after the Biggest Loser TV show; a network of employees who share their health improvement successes with others; and regional and corporate wellness coaches.

H-E-B also is expanding community outreach (i.e., adding healthy cooking and fitness demonstrations to its in-store screening days) and in-school wellness (i.e., the development of a toolkit for schools to create a culture of health).
Eyes on the Forum
Several media members covered the 2nd Annual SALSI Research Forum: Latino Obesity on May 10, 2011. These included:

- San Antonio Express-News
- San Antonio Business Journal
- La Prensa
- Univision 41 KWEX-TV
- News 4 WOAI-TV
- WOAI-AM
- KTSA-AM

Attendee Roster

IHPR @ UTHSCSA
Rebecca Adeigbe
Cliff Despres
Laura Esperza
Kipling J. Gallion
Daisy Morales-Campos
Amelie G. Ramirez
Laura Rubalcava
Amanda Sintes-Yallen

UTHSCSA
Bryan Bayles
Oralia Bazaldua
Jane M. Cardea
Marline Guerrero
Polly Hitchcock Noel
Carlos Lorenzo
Maria G. Montez
Manuel Angel Oscos-Sanchez
Theresa Powell
Carmen Roman-Shriver
Brent Shriver
Jane E. M. Steffensen
Barbara Turner
Paul Winkler

UTSA
Rosalie Aguilar
Bonnie Dillon
Daisy Escamilla
Roger Figueroa
Jill Fleuriet
Donovan L. Fogt
Ginny Garcia
Jeff Kantor

Jessica Leeds
Arely Perez
Juliet M. Ray
Barbara Reyes
Dawnlee J. Roberson
Maureen Rubin
Erica T. Sosa
Howaida Werfelli
Summer Wilmoth
Suzanne M. Winter
Alice Fang Yan

S.A. SCHOOLS
Meg Domas

S.A. COMMUNITY
Valerie Biediger
Shannan Calderon
Nancy G. Cedillo
Blair Condon
Lisa M. Denice
Irene Hernandez
Amy Erskine Hinitt
Denise Jones
Liset Leal-Vasquez
Brad Milne
Ron Morales
Luz Myriam Neira
Pilar Oates
Mario Obedo
Trina Roman
Mary Ullmann Japhet
John A. Velasquez

KLRN
Lisa McGrath
Michelle Reel
Yvonne Yates

SPEAKERS
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S.A. CITY
John Berlanga
Andrea Bottiglieri
David Clear
Elizabeth Luna
John Nava
Charles Pruski
Caroline Roffidal-Blanco
Christine Rutherford-Stuart
Clint Scheel
Kathy Shields
Ellen Spitsen
Mark Stewart
Amanda Sylvie
Katherine Velasquez
Judit Vega

CITY OF LAREDO
Hector F. Gonzalez
Zaida Gonzalez
Nora Martinez

STATE OF TEXAS
Sandra Guerra-Cantu
The 2nd Annual SALSI Research Forum: Latino Obesity on May 10, 2011, involved the partnership of the following entities:

**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 biomedial and biotechnology industries in San Antonio; etc. Find out more [here](#).

**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% 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. Find out more [here](#).

**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 out more [here](#).

**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. Find out more [here](#).

**About the Report**
This report was produced by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Editors: Cliff Despres and Amanda Sintes-Yallen, IHPR
Design: Jeffrey Heinke Design
Photos: Lester Rosebrock, UTHSCSA

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.