

Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Volume 4, Issue 2, Winter, 2011-12

Inside This Issue

Page 2: Director's Corner, News & Funding

Page 3: Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

Page 4: Grantee Corner

Page 5: Research

Page 6: Policy & Built Environment Corner

Page 7: Video Roundup

Find Us Online



Got a News Item?

Send news items, story ideas and suggestions to despres@uthscsa.edu.

Sugary Drinks 101 for Latinos

Young people are being exposed to a substantial amount of marketing for sugary drinks, such as full-calorie sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks and fruit drinks, according to a recent [study](#) from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity.

The study, the most comprehensive analysis of sugary drink nutrition and marketing ever conducted, shows that companies target young people, especially black and Latino youth.

In a two-part interview with *SaludToday*, Jennifer Harris, director of marketing initiatives for the Rudd Center, details exactly how beverage companies are marketing to Latino youth, how sugary drinks contribute to childhood obesity and what parents need to know to ensure their children and teens are getting the nutrition they need.

Read Part 1 in full [here](#) and Part 2 in full [here](#).

The following are a few selected questions and answers:

How are marketers specifically targeting Black and Latino youth with sugary drink ads?

We don't know for sure that the marketers are targeting anyone because we don't have access to their internal strategy documents. So what we do is look at the data and ask a couple of questions. We ask if they're using techniques that appeal more to one group or another. For example, Sprite



Data indicate that companies involved in marketing sugary beverages target young people, especially black and Latino youth, according to the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity.

Read More about Latinos and Sugary Beverages and the Impact of a Sugary Beverage Tax on [Page 3](#) of this E-newsletter.

has a step-and-jerk dance competition, which is popular among Black, inner-city youth; that would be an indicator they're targeting Black youth. Or any kind of Spanish-language advertising would be obvious that they're targeting a Latino audience.

We know how many Black or Latino youth are seeing different advertising, so we compare that to how many ads white youth are seeing, and the data show us what products are reaching disproportionately more Black or Latino youth.

How are sugary drink companies advertising on Latino-focused media?

There were really only a handful of companies that advertise on Spanish-language TV, and Coca-Cola was clearly the leader. Over a third of the

Continued on page 3 ►



Jennifer Harris

Photo via the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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

Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

The obesity statistics for young Latinos are frightening. Nearly 41 percent of Mexican-American children ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight. By comparison, almost 32 percent white and 30 percent of African-American children are.

Among preschoolers, nearly one out of every four Latinos is overweight.

Studies show that Latino children's diets are less healthy, their access to healthy foods is more limited, they are less active in organized sports and they watch more television than their peers of other races or ethnicities.

But I don't even need these statistics. All I have to do is visit my grandchild's school, see Latino families shopping in stores or look outside at empty playgrounds. You and I can "see" the childhood obesity epidemic in predominantly Latino regions.

This disturbing trend sometimes makes me to wonder if this could be the first generation of children to live shorter, sicker lives than their parents. We can't afford to let that happen.



Amelie Ramirez

That's why efforts to reduce and prevent childhood obesity are so critically important, and that's why RWJF and *Salud America!* created a national network of more than 1,900 researchers, community leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders to seek environmental and policy solutions to address Latino childhood obesity.

To that end, *Salud America!* recently unveiled three major research briefs examining current evidence on Latino childhood obesity issues: the availability of healthy, affordable foods, opportunities for physical activity and the impact of food marketing on diets. Also, 20 *Salud America!* pilot research grantees unveiled individual research briefs full of outcomes and implications for policy related to Latino childhood obesity. These grantees are models of "what's working" to prevent obesity. You can read all of our briefs [here](#).

I'd also urge you to watch a dramatic Latino childhood obesity [video](#) and use it as a "discussion starter" at school or community meetings about childhood obesity.

In the end, it's important to remember just how complicated an issue childhood obesity is for Latinos and know that efforts to solve this epidemic must address it on every front, from nutrition to physical activity to media and marketing.



News Brief

Salud America! Advisor Lauded

Dr. Amy Yaroch, a *Salud America!* advisor and executive director of the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition in Omaha, Neb., was one of five researchers chosen to receive the Lawrence W. Green Best Paper of the Year Award from the Society for Public Health Education. Her [study](#), "Direct and Mediated Effects of Two Theoretically Based Interventions to Increase Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables in the Healthy Body Healthy Spirit Trial," was published in an issue of the journal *Health Education & Behavior*.



Amy Yaroch

Salud America! Director Adds New Leadership Roles

In January 2012, IHPD Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez was chosen for a pair of leadership roles that will further her efforts to study cancer and related issues, including health disparities and cancer's link to obesity, and improve the health of residents in South Texas and beyond. She was elected to the board of directors for C-Change, a national organization that aims to leverage the expertise of leaders from government, business and nonprofit sectors of society to eliminate cancer as a major health problem as soon as possible. The group's 22-member board of directors is elected by a vote of the entire C-Change membership, including former President George H.W. Bush. See C-Change board members [here](#). Ramirez also was elected to the 2012 board of directors for The Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas (TAMEST), which is chaired by U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Funding

Grant Listings

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR), have obesity-related funding opportunities that are seeking applications, or compile lists of funding opportunities.

[RWJF](#), [NIH](#), [NCCOR](#)

Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Training Institute and Internships

The 2012 *Éxito!* Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training application is now [available for download](#). *Éxito!* conducts a five-day summer institute and offers internships to encourage minority master's-level students and master's-trained health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a career in research regarding cancer and other Latino health issues. Applications are due March 1, 2012. *Éxito!* is funded by the National Cancer Institute and led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind *Salud America!*

Grantee Corner

Editor's Note: This is a five-part series that will feature new research briefs on Latino childhood obesity issues by Salud America! grantees. These briefs analyze a wide range of issues, from the impact of menu labeling in small restaurants in Los Angeles, to how after-school programs can help Latino youth be active, to how community gardens can help lower-income Latino families eat healthier. Grantees are currently discussing their findings in their communities to influence healthy changes. Find all grantee briefs [here](#).

Alexy Arauz Boudreau



Study: Health Coaches Key to Addressing Latino Lifestyle Issues

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Alexy Arauz Boudreau of Massachusetts General Hospital tested the feasibility and effectiveness of a family-centered approach consisting of interactive group classes followed by six months of health coaching.

The five-session group classes, known as Power-Up, are for Latino families with obese children. Health coaching is delivered by a Latina medical assistant who knows the community.

Key preliminary findings include:

- group classes and health coaching can be well-attended by Latinos;
- in the intervention's group classes, children and parents are assimilating nutritional knowledge; and
- obese Latino children are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Results indicate that health coaches are key to addressing lifestyle diseases among Latino populations at high risk of obesity. Addressing reimbursement for health coaching services is a critical step in transforming the medical system to a more efficient and successful system.

Norma Olvera



Study: Mother-Daughter Exercise Program Improves Latina Girls' Weight

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Norma Olvera of the University of Houston assessed the immediate and long-term impact of a program—Behavior Opportunities Uniting in Nutrition, Counseling, and Exercise (BOUNCE)—on indicators of obesity.

Mother-daughter pairs enrolled in BOUNCE participated in a four-week healthy lifestyle summer program, followed by a 12-week, family-based aerobic program.

Key preliminary findings include:

- a family-centered exercise program successfully reduced obesity and increased physical activity levels in Latina girls; and
- Latina girls steadily increased their daily minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity per week, with an average of 84.5 minutes.

Study findings suggest that Latina girls who participate in a family-centered exercise program during the summer are likely to reduce weight, body mass index, waist circumference and body fat percentage. Similarly, they are also likely to increase their moderate-to-vigorous activity.

Angela Wiley



Study: Fewer Than Half of Latino Families Eat Meals Together Daily

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Angela Wiley of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign took a family-based approach—accounting for developmental patterns of behavior and practices in early mealtime

experiences—to prevent childhood obesity and promote wellbeing among Spanish-speaking families in Illinois.

The six-week curriculum actively involves Latino families in food preparation, shared physical activity, and shared mealtimes featuring family storytelling and scrapbooking.

Key preliminary findings include:

- fewer than half of Latino families are eating meals together seven days a week;
- Latino children are drinking roughly three fourths of a soda per day on average; and
- fruit and vegetable consumption is well below daily recommended values.

The study found that, during the weekly workshops, family members enjoyed planning ways to improve their meal-time quality by increasing positive conversation and storytelling and reducing TV viewing. Policymakers can help protect family time for shared meals.

Dina Castro



Study: Community Gardens Can Boost Latino Child Health, Save Families Money

In her *Salud America!* pilot research project, Dr. Dina Castro of the University of North Carolina used three community gardens and parental nutrition education and activities to promote healthy eating

and physical activity among lower-income Latino families who have young children.

Key preliminary findings include:

- children had access to more fruits and vegetables after their families participated in the community garden program; and
- having access to a community garden helped lower-income families save money.

Results suggest an increase in availability of fruits and vegetables in the households of children who participated in the community gardening project. Over the long term, continued access to the gardens and technical support provided through the project may help these children to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

Research

Study: Latino Parents Willing to Make Lifestyle Changes to Help Overweight Kids

Parents of overweight Latino children are willing to make tortillas with vegetable oil instead of lard and to make other healthy food and lifestyle choices to get their kids fit, a researcher at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas has found.

The focus group findings, which appear online in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, provide important starting points for fighting the epidemic of childhood obesity in Latinos, the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in Texas and nationally.

“Almost half of all Latino kids are either overweight or obese,” said Dr. Glenn Flores, senior author of the study, in a news release. “It’s an important issue in terms of our future generations. If we intervene early enough, we won’t have obese adults.”



Glenn Flores

Researchers asked parents about their children’s eating and exercise habits and roadblocks to making healthier choices. The 19 parents and their kids then sampled Latino foods prepared with healthy alternatives.

“Themes regarding the most important things parents can do to help overweight children lose weight included encouragement, not making the child feel left out, the whole family eating healthy, and the parent setting a good example,” Flores said.

The groups responded favorably to most of the healthy



UT Southwestern Medical Center researcher Dr. Glenn Flores, in this video from KDFW-TV in Dallas, led a new study involving “making tortillas without lard.”

ingredient substitutions with the exception of brown rice, which didn’t go over as well as white rice. Beans prepared without lard, healthy-grain enchiladas with low-fat cheese, baked fish and skinless chicken breasts all got high marks from the families.

In addition to encouraging their children to eat healthier, other actions the parents indicated would help their children lose weight included limiting portion sizes and second helpings, drinking more water, increasing physical activity, limiting time in front of the television or computer, and participating in exercise as a family activity. Barriers to improving physical fitness included cost, time constraints and neighborhood safety.

“Sometimes getting kids into organized sports in the inner city is very difficult,” Flores said. “The kids usually want it, but it’s not always easy to find.”



Research Briefs

U.S. Obesity Rates Plateau (at a High Level); Rates Still Higher in Blacks, Latinos

The prevalence of obesity in the U.S. largely leveled off over the last decade, even as some individual groups, such as boys from ages 6 to 19, saw increases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported

in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, [Bloomberg reports](#). Obesity rates in adults rose slightly to 35.7% from 30.5% between 1999 and 2010, compared with rates that nearly doubled the two previous decades. Overall, a third of the population—78 million adults and 12.5 million children—were obese in 2009- 2010. Also, a *Medscape* report on the same study indicates that racial differences also were striking—black and Hispanic children and adolescents had higher obesity rates (24.3% and 21.2%, respectively) than white children (14%).

Policy & Built Environment Corner

Looking Ahead: 2012 Food Politics

Editor's Note: Reprinted from www.foodpolitics.com with permission from Marion Nestle.

By Marion Nestle

Q: What's on the food politics agenda for 2012? Can we expect anything good to happen?

A: By "good," I assume you mean actions that make our food system safer and healthier for consumers, farmers, farm workers, and the planet.

Ordinarily, I am optimistic about such things. This year? Not so much. The crystal ball is cloudy, but seems to suggest:

Political leaders will avoid or postpone taking action on food issues that threaten corporate interests. Sometimes Congress acts in favor of public health, but 2012 is an election year. Expect calls for corporate freedom to take precedence over those for responsible regulations. Maybe next year.

Something will happen on the farm bill, but what?

Last fall's secret draft bill included at least some support for producing and marketing fruits and vegetables, and only minimal cuts to SNAP (food stamps). Once that process failed, Congress must now adopt that draft, start over from scratch, or postpone the whole mess until after the election.

SNAP participation will increase, but so will pressure to cut benefits. With the economy depressed, wages low, and unemployment high, demands on SNAP keep rising. In 2011, SNAP benefits cost \$72 billion, by far the largest farm bill expenditure and a tempting target for budget cutters. While some advocates will be struggling to keep the program's benefits intact, others will try to transform SNAP so it promotes purchases of more healthful foods. Both groups should expect strong opposition.

Childhood obesity will be the flash point for fights about limits on food marketing. *The Lancet* recently summarized [in articles and commentaries by COMNet (Collaborative Obesity Modeling Network) members] the state of the science on successful obesity interventions: taxes on unhealthy foods and beverages, restrictions on marketing such items, traffic-light front-of-package food labels, and programs to discourage consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and television viewing. Expect the food industry to continue to get Congress to block such measures, as it did with U.S. Department of Agriculture school nutrition standards (hence: pizza counts as a vegetable).



Marion Nestle

The Federal Trade Commission will postpone release of nutrition standards for marketing to children. Although Congress asked for such standards in the first place—and the standards are entirely voluntary—it just inserted a section in the appropriations bill requiring a cost-benefit analysis before the FTC can release them. Why does the food industry care about voluntary restrictions? Because they might work (see previous prediction).

The Food and Drug Administration will delay issuing front-of-package labeling guidelines as long as it can. The FDA asked the Institute of Medicine for advice about such labels. The institute recommended

labels listing only calories, saturated and trans fat, sodium, and sugars—all nutrients to avoid. Although the institute did not mention traffic-light labels, it did recommend check marks or stars, which come close. The food industry much prefers its own method, Facts Up Front, which emphasizes "good-for-you" nutrients. It is already using this system. Will the FDA try to turn the institute recommendations into regulations? Maybe later.

The FDA will (still) be playing catch-up on food safety. The FDA got through the 2011 appropriations process with an increase of about \$50 million for its inspection needs. This is better than nothing but nowhere near what it needs to carry out its food safety mandates. The FDA currently inspects less than two percent of imported food shipments and five percent of domestic production facilities. The overwhelming nature of the task requires FDA to set priorities. Small producers think these priorities are misplaced. Is the FDA going after them because they are easier targets than industrial producers whose products have been responsible for some of the more deadly outbreaks? Time will tell.

On the bright side, the food movement will gather even more momentum. While the food industry digs in to fight public health regulations, the food movement will continue to attract support from those willing to promote a healthier and more sustainable food system. Watch for more young people going into farming...and more farmers' markets, farm-to-school programs, school meal initiatives, and grassroots community efforts to implement food programs and legislate local reforms. There is plenty of hope for the future in local efforts to improve school meals, reduce childhood obesity, and make healthier food more available and affordable for all.

Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



School's Innovative 'Morning Jog' Program



What Is the Single Best Thing You Can Do for Your Health?



Latino Child Obesity: Did You Know?



Latinos, Others Honored for Overcoming Obstacles



Quality P.E. as a Solution to Child Obesity



San Antonio School Salad Bar Initiative

About the E-newsletter

This E-newsletter is produced quarterly by *Salud America!* Please send news items or story ideas to despres@uthscsa.edu.

Editor: Cliff Despres

Contributor: Cliff Despres

Design: Jeffrey Heinke Design

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Principal Investigator, Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

The Institute for Health Promotion Research

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

(210) 562-6500 • IHPR.uthscsa.edu

Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, [click here](#). To learn more about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to combat childhood obesity, [click here](#).

'Be Well' Website Features Stories of Latino, Other Mothers Making a Difference

The *Be Well* website, from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, spotlights inspiring stories of mothers across the nation in print ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) and on [video](#).

The mothers, including several Latinas, are recognized for creating their own ways to make their homes and communities healthier places for children.

