

**National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research External Scientific Panel (NESP) Webinar
December 14, 2017**

NESP Thoughts and Recommendations for NCCOR

Attendees

NESP Members: L. Barbour, R. Brownson, J. Cawley, T. Huang, S. Kumanyika, T. Robinson, J. Sallis

NESP Liaisons: D. Toombs (USDA), S. Yanovski (NIH)

NCCOR Coordinating Center: M. Brna, L. Canady, T. Phillips, E. Ryan-Castillo

On December 14, 2017, the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) hosted a webinar with the NCCOR External Scientific Panel members and liaisons and discussed emerging areas, current research needs/gaps, and potential strategic alliances.

NCCOR welcomed new NESP member Linda (Lynn) Barbour, M.D., M.S.P.H, an obstetrics and gynecology expert who brings insight on birth to two years. Her research interests include endocrine disorders in pregnancy, obesity and diabetes and pregnancy, and fetal programming of obesity.

Highlights from the discussion are listed below.

Priority Topics and Cutting-Edge Areas

The following are key recommendations discussed during the webinar:

Consider adjusting our research and evaluation efforts based on our increasing understanding of health equity and social determinants of health.

- Investigate how to remove barriers and build health equity to prevent disparities instead of trying to reverse them after they already exist.
- Focus more on research and evaluation strategies or approaches that address the barriers that are driving disparities instead of applying traditional approaches to at-risk communities.
- Evaluate successful approaches to addressing inequalities (e.g., the inequalities around education and academic performance), and how those approaches differ based on target population. Examine how underlying psychological and social factors are addressed.
- Research what solutions are needed to allow interventions to work in disadvantaged communities.
- Foster innovation in health equity research (i.e., “study different things in different ways”). What has been tried concerning health equity hasn’t moved the needle, so there is a need for innovative approaches. The first phase could focus on the environments in which we live, work, and play.

Conduct additional analyses using the Healthy Community Study data sets.

- The Healthy Community Study (HCS) demonstrated that community-based childhood obesity interventions appeared to be effective among Caucasian youths, with less impact on African American and Latino youths. This finding suggests the following research opportunities:
 1. Use the HCS's data to study differences across ethnic communities and how childhood obesity interventions differ based on target population.
 2. Determine what may boost the effectiveness of interventions in African American and Latino communities.
- When the HCS dataset is released in June 2018, NCCOR could provide a recommended research agenda to S. Artega, which could include:
 - Conducting additional analyses to understand the health disparities and why they exist.
 - Researching potential solutions to health disparities in community-based childhood obesity interventions.

Expand NCCOR's childhood obesity research focus to include pre-natal and birth to 2 years.

- Research how to reduce the risk of childhood obesity during pregnancy and birth to 2 years.
- Evaluate pre-natal and zero to two programs (such as educational programs) and approaches to preventing childhood obesity.
- NIH has identified pregnancy as well as infancy to age 2 as priority areas for research in childhood obesity prevention; it is timely for NCCOR to work on this.
- Explore how the introduction of foods in early life affects taste preferences later in life.

Learn more about how technology influences childhood obesity.

- Explore how technology (e.g., social media) affects children's eating habits and lifestyle.
- Determine if technology has been shown to facilitate effective behavior change in children.
- Examine the use of community social media platforms (e.g., Next Door), to improve healthy eating, physical activity, and lifestyle.

Measure the effects of obesity-related policies because they are key to determining impact.

- Measure the effects of new policies (e.g., city-level soda tax).
- Collect pre- and post-policy implementation data to identify what effects these cutting-edge policies are having. NCCOR has developed a rapid response funding mechanism to receive baseline data prior to some policy changes. NIH also has a mechanism for rapid funding of time-sensitive program and policy interventions.

The following are other recommendations discussed during the webinar:

Participate in INFORMAS.

- Develop a U.S. version of the INFORMAS framework; other countries are integrating their data.
- Map existing data and identify data gaps.

Expand NCCOR's research agenda to include portion size issues.

- The Global Social Enterprise Initiative at Georgetown University is holding a workshop roundtable on portion size issues; NCCOR could participate.
- Identify what additional research may be informative for portion size issues.

Strategic Alliance Opportunities

The group also discussed future strategic alliances that could be formed with funders, organizations that conduct research, groups that can strengthen NCCOR's work, and other government agencies/groups (for collaboration). Some of the organizations that were identified during the conversation include:

- American Diabetes Association (ADA)

The ADA Interest Group on Pregnancy & Reproductive Health is comprised of pediatricians, obstetricians, and endocrinologist interested in early childhood obesity, specifically the first 1,000 days. They are offering more grants in this field.

- Diabetes & Obesity Research Institute

This is a well-established institute interested in pediatric obesity, programs, and research.

- Endocrine Society

The Endocrine Society is interested in childhood obesity.

- Laura and John Arnold Foundation

This foundation is interested in soda taxes and reducing sugar in the American diet.

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

This foundation has funded pregnancy research in terms of improving growth and development in children. In addition, they have funded research on the developmental brain and appetite regulation.

- American Heart Association (AHA)

AHA is becoming more interested in metabolic disease, cardiovascular disease, developmental origins, and lifespan research.