

**National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research External Scientific Panel (NESP) Webinars
February 6 and 13, 2019**

NESP Thoughts and Recommendations for NCCOR

Attendees

February 6, 2019 Call

NESP Members: J. Cawley, T. Huang, E. Taveras

NESP Liaison: D. Toombs (USDA)

February 13, 2019 Call

NESP Members: A. Ramirez, T. Robinson, J. Sallis, M. Story

NCCOR Coordinating Center: M. Brna, A. Gribbin, T. Phillips, E. Ryan-Castillo, A. Samuels

On February 6 and 13, 2019, the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) hosted webinars with the NCCOR External Scientific Panel members to discuss priority topics and emerging areas, current research needs and gaps, and potential strategic alliances. Highlights from those discussion follow.

Priority Topics and Emerging Areas

Key recommendations discussed during the webinar:

Convene a meeting of the minds to “reset” the childhood obesity agenda.

- The purpose of this meeting would be to:
 - Hold an honest discussion on why progress isn’t being made
 - Brainstorm and identify breakthrough opportunities
 - Discuss the implications of the two recent *Lancet* articles
- Participants may include outside experts and like-minded organizations (such as Trust for America’s Health) as well as nontraditional organizations. In addition, authors of the *Lancet* articles could join.

Identify and synthesize what NCCOR has learned over the past 10 years (lessons learned), what has worked, and how to move forward.

Explore a system thinking approach to childhood obesity prevention.

- System thinking is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system’s constituent parts interrelate and how that system works over time and within the context of larger systems.
- NCCOR has yet to embrace a system thinking approach to prevention; however, this type of approach is already being used in the field as evident in the Institute of Medicine’s *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention* report.
- NCCOR could translate a system thinking approach into specifics for childhood obesity prevention. We could identify what has worked in childhood obesity prevention and how to

leverage those solutions using a systems perspective—for example, targeting the food system and focusing on portion size.

- There is also a need to monitor system changes. NCCOR could develop a monitoring strategy to measure change.
- Like the “learning health care system”—defined by the Institute of Medicine as a system in which science, informatics, incentives, and culture are aligned for continuous improvement and innovation, with best practices seamlessly embedded in the delivery process and new knowledge captured as an integral by-product of the delivery experience—NCCOR could develop a “learning public health system.”

Based on precision medicine approaches, develop a process for tailoring effective obesity interventions to specific populations (e.g., low-income and high-risk populations).

- Because interventions and policies are more effective among certain populations, we need to identify how to tailor or augment obesity interventions to be effective among low-income and high-risk populations.
- There is also a need to explore how policies are implemented and assess the equity of implementation.
- As with precision medicine—defined as an emerging approach for disease treatment and prevention that takes into account individual variability in genes, environment, and lifestyle for each person—we need to think about group or individual tailoring of public health interventions.

Re-establish an emphasis on rapid-response funding for baseline data on policy initiatives.

- More rapid-response funding opportunities are needed to collect baseline data for policy initiatives such as soda taxes. NCCOR focused on this in the past; however, the need for it seems to have grown.

Expand research related to environment or place.

- To better understand the effects of environment and place on obesity, NCCOR could promote the following research strategies:
 - Add environmental measures to effective obesity-related individual-level interventions to see if those interventions work better in different type of environments.
 - Solicit studies to test tailoring of interventions to place.
 - Identify obesogenic environments and tailor interventions to them.

Current Research Needs and Gaps

Key recommendations discussed during the webinar:

Expand NCCOR’s childhood obesity focus to include:

Portion size

- The Center for Systems and Community Design at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy is collaborating with Georgetown University’s Global Social Enterprise Initiative (GSEI) to help to inform the roadmap for a national movement for portion-size management. NCCOR could participate in this effort.
- There may also be an opportunity to collaborate with CUNY on social entrepreneurship efforts to improve implementation of evidence-based programs.

Food marketing

- Research topics related food marketing need to be identified.
- Increased monitoring of food marketing is needed.
- NCCOR could explore effective approaches to counter certain food marketing, especially marketing to children and at-risk/underserved populations.

Critical periods in early life

- Research in the areas of neuroscience and microbiome is important and currently missing in early-life research.

Implementation science for obesity

- Implementation science is the study of methods to promote the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices, interventions, and policies into routine health care and public health settings.
- There is an opportunity for NCCOR to identify what implementation methods have worked and to explore strategies to get more people to adopt effective implementation methods.

Obesity treatment

- There is a need to research the best treatment approaches for children and adults with severe obesity. This may include medication, therapeutics, devices, reimbursement, and policy.

Technology

- There is an opportunity to explore technology's influence on physical activity, lifestyle, and obesity. NCCOR could also explore the digital divide of technology and how technology may negatively impact some populations.

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).

Organizations identified during the conversation:

- Laura and John Arnold Foundation
 - The foundation seeks to improve the lives of individuals by strengthening our social, governmental, and economic systems.
 - The foundation is currently interested in reducing sugar consumption in the American diet.
- The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
 - J-PAL is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence.
 - J-PAL conducts randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty.
 - The center is currently participating in randomized experiments with food medicine.

- International governments (e.g., the UK, CA, or AU)
 - NCCOR could collaborate with international governments to share lessons learned, insights, and report cards. We could also co-investigate certain research topics.
- Other U.S. federal agencies
 - NCCOR could partner with other U.S. federal agencies that are funding research in this area. For example, the Department of Transportation may fund relevant research.
- Organizations with a large reach
 - NCCOR could partner with organizations with a large membership, so we can educate many people and get them involved in childhood obesity prevention.