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NIH Launches Program To Develop Innovative Approaches To Combat Obesity

12/11/2009

Source: National Institutes of Health

The National Institutes of Health is launching a \$37 million program that will use findings from basic research on human behavior to develop more effective interventions to reduce obesity. The program, Translating Basic Behavioral and Social Science Discoveries into Interventions to Reduce Obesity, will fund interdisciplinary teams of researchers at seven research sites. Investigators will conduct experimental research, formative research to increase understanding of populations being studied, small studies known as proof of concept trials, and pilot and feasibility studies to identify promising new avenues for encouraging behaviors that prevent or treat obesity.

The program is led by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), in partnership with the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).

"Obesity is a significant public health challenge raising an individual's risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, certain cancers, osteoarthritis, and other conditions," said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D. "These grants are intended to develop new and innovative ways to tackle this important problem. This approach differs from previous large clinical trials of behavioral interventions to reduce obesity by placing new emphasis on applying findings from basic behavioral and social sciences to improve behavioral strategies."

The program's studies focus on diverse populations at high risk of being overweight or obese, including Latino and African-American adults, African-American adolescents, low-income populations, pregnant women, and women in the menopausal transition. The interventions being developed include creative new approaches to promote awareness of specific eating behaviors, decrease the desire for high-calorie foods, reduce stress-related eating, increase motivation to adhere to weight loss strategies, engage an individual's social networks and communities to encourage physical activity, and improve sleep patterns. Brain scans will also be used to understand brain mechanisms in obesity that might guide the development of new interventions.

The research projects, principal investigators, study sites, and the NIH sponsors include:

- SCALE: Small Changes and Lasting Effects, Mary E. Charlson, M.D., Weill Medical College of Cornell University, New York City, sponsored by the NHLBI. This study will develop and refine a mindful eating intervention aimed at producing small, sustainable

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changes in eating behavior in overweight or obese African-American and Latino adults with a goal of achieving at least a 7 percent weight reduction in each participant.

- Translating Habituation Research to Interventions for Pediatric Obesity, Leonard H. Epstein, Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo, sponsored by the NIDDK. This study will translate basic research on the reduced response to food after repeated exposure over time to identify and test strategies for reducing the intake of high-calorie foods while increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables that children consume.
- Interventionist Procedures for Adherence to Weight Loss Recommendations in Black Adolescents, Sylvie Naar-King, Ph.D. and Kai-Lin Catherine Jen, Ph.D., Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich., sponsored by the NHLBI, co-funded by the NICHD. This study will develop and refine a home and community-based intervention using findings from basic behavioral research on human motivation to improve adherence to weight loss strategies in African-American adolescents.
- Developing an Intervention to Prevent Visceral Fat in Premenopausal Women, Lynda H. Powell, M.Ed., Ph.D., Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, sponsored by the NHLBI. This study will develop a multi-level intervention targeting the individual, her social network, and the community to increase physical activity and reduce chronic stress and depression in order to reduce unhealthy patterns of weight gain in women in the menopausal transition. This project focuses on reducing visceral fat because this is the type of fat most strongly correlated with health risks.
- Increasing Sleep Duration: A Novel Approach to Weight Control, Rena R. Wing, Ph.D., Miriam Hospital, Providence, R.I., sponsored by the NCI. This study will translate basic research on sleep duration into a unique method to reduce obesity and obesity-related conditions in young and middle-aged overweight or obese adults.
- Novel Interventions to Reduce Stress-induced Non-homeostatic Eating, Elissa S. Epel, Ph.D., Barbara A. Laraia, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D. and Nancy E. Adler, Ph.D., University of California, San Francisco, sponsored by the NHLBI. This study will develop intervention strategies to reduce stress-induced eating in lower-income pregnant women, focusing on the reward and stress response systems that may influence eating behaviors and lead to unhealthy weight gain during pregnancy.
- Habitual and Neurocognitive Processes in Adolescent Obesity Prevention, Kim Daniel Reynolds, Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University, Calif., sponsored by the NHLBI, co-funded by the NICHD. This study will develop intervention strategies to improve nutrition behaviors in adolescents based on basic behavioral research on the formation of habits, self-regulation of eating behaviors, and the influence of neurocognitive processes on dietary behavior.

A Resource and Coordination Unit (RCU), led by David Cella, Ph.D. of Northwestern University, Chicago, and funded by the NIH's OBSSR, will facilitate collaboration across the studies. As part of this program, the RCU will also organize an OBSSR-funded conference in 2010 addressing methods in behavioral intervention development.

To arrange an interview with an NHLBI spokesperson, please contact the NHLBI Communications Office at (301) 496-4236 or nhlbi_news@nhlbi.nih.gov. To interview an NIDDK spokesperson, contact the NIDDK Office of Communications and Public Liaison at 301-496-3583 or at niddkmedia@mail.nih.gov. To interview an NCI spokesperson, contact the NCI Office of Media Relations at 301-496-6641 or ncipressofficers@mail.nih.gov. To interview an NICHD

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spokesperson, contact the NICHD Public Information and Communications Branch at 301-496-5133. To interview an OBSSR spokesperson, contact the OBSSR at 301-594-4574 or annb@nih.gov.

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) opened officially on July 1, 1995. The U.S. Congress established the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) in the Office of the Director, NIH, in recognition of the key role that behavioral and social factors often play in illness and health. The OBSSR mission is to stimulate behavioral and social sciences research throughout NIH and to integrate these areas of research more fully into others of the NIH health research enterprise, thereby improving our understanding, treatment, and prevention of disease. For more information, please visit <http://obssr.od.nih.gov>.

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) sponsors research on development, before and after birth; maternal, child, and family health; reproductive biology and population issues; and medical rehabilitation. For more information, visit the Institute's Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov> or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) conducts and supports basic and clinical research and research training on some of the most common, severe and disabling conditions affecting Americans. The Institute's research interests include diabetes and other endocrine and metabolic diseases; digestive diseases, nutrition, and obesity; and kidney, urologic and hematologic diseases. For more information, visit www.niddk.nih.gov.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) plans, conducts, and supports research related to the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart, blood vessel, lung, and blood diseases; and sleep disorders. The Institute also administers national health education campaigns on women and heart disease, healthy weight for children, and other topics. NHLBI press releases and other materials are available online at www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

Resources:

- RFA for Translating Basic Behavioral and Social Science Discoveries into Interventions to Reduce Obesity;
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HL-08-013.html>
- Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults;

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_home.htm

- NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative;

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/oei/>

- NIH Obesity Research;

<http://www.obesityresearch.nih.gov/>

- Aim for a Healthy Weight;

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/index.htm

- We Can!;

<http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

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