



CORICA

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Principal Investigators

Roshan Bastani, PhD
Principal Investigator
UCLA School of Public Health

Annette Maxwell, DrPH
Co-Principal Investigator
UCLA School of Public Health

Antronette Yancey, MD, MPH
Co-Principal Investigator
UCLA School of Public Health



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Community Investigators

Paul Simon, MD, MPH
Los Angeles Dept of Health
Services

Joyce Jones Guinyard,
DC
Community Health Councils,
Inc.

Cynthia Harding, MPH
Los Angeles Dept of Health
Services



CORICA

Staff

Ritesh Mistry, PhD
Project Director
UCLA School of Public Health

Irene Peña, M.A.
Project Coordinator
UCLA School of Public Health

OBESITY RATES PAVE THE ROAD TO CANCER DISPARITIES

Obesity is a risk factor for several types of cancer, including breast and colorectal cancers¹, as well as for chronic diseases such as diabetes, stroke, hypertension and heart disease.

The 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey estimates that 31% of Americans twenty years of age and older are obese; and an additional 33% are overweight. This represents an 8% increase in overweight and obesity compared to estimates from a previous survey (1988-1994).¹

While obesity is on the rise nation-wide for all ethnic groups, the rates are **highest** among African Americans, Mexican Americans and American Indians. And, obesity affects women more than men in the US, especially among the low income.² The link between obesity and

cancer suggests that groups with higher obesity rates in time, may also experience higher rates of cancer.

In Los Angeles (LA) County, where an estimated 19.3% of adults are obese, certain neighborhoods are affected more than others. According to a Los Angeles Department of Health Services report, the highest rates occur in South LA, where 30% of adults are obese. Rates are also high in East LA, where 24% of adults are obese. Among ethnic groups in LA County, African Americans have the highest obesity rate (31%) followed by Latinos (24%) and whites (16%).³

Access to affordable healthier food options and open spaces can make a big difference in the fight against obesity.

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CALIFORNIA FOOD POLICY ADVOCATES

Big Problem, Big Solution

The California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious and affordable food.

As California's only statewide anti-poverty program focused exclusively on hunger and malnutrition among low-income people, CFPA works to develop and implement public policies that recognize adequate nutrition as a necessary condition for good health, development, education and productivity.

Regarding poverty and hunger in California, Matt Sharp, CFPA Regional Advocate based in Los Angeles says, "the problem in a state as populous as California requires the type of large-scale solutions that only come about through policies that bring additional resources to local communities."

Assembly Bill 2384, the most innovative of four pieces of legislation proposed by CFPA this year is one such policy option that recently passed the Assembly floor to go to the Senate. If enacted, AB 2384 would improve fruit and vegetable access and affordability for food stamp recipients. Too many households face barriers to meeting dietary guidelines due to the high cost and low availability of produce in their neighborhoods.

AB 2384 would require the Department of Health Services to develop a "Healthy Purchase" pilot program to offer small, corner grocers in low-income areas *incentives and technical assistance* to increase retail space for fresh produce. And, the legislation includes *bonus dollars* for fresh produce purchases by food stamp recipients.

CFPA can be reached at <http://cfpa.net>.



2nd Annual CORICA Symposium OBESITY PREVENTION: FINDING THE ANSWERS TOGETHER



Dr. Yancey and Dr. McCarthy team up to promote physical fitness and nutrition at the 2nd Annual CORICA Symposium.

The UCLA CORICA Network held its 2nd Annual Symposium on May 10, at the Radisson Wilshire Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles.

This year's event brought together over 225 people, representing more than 100 community-based organizations to identify ways that community-university research partnerships could strengthen obesity prevention and control efforts.

Lectures by UCLA faculty underscored four major concerns: (1) The growing burden of obesity, (2) Biological connections between obesity and cancer, (3) Cultural influences, and (4) Childhood obesity.

Four break-out sessions allowed attendees to examine solutions to obesity from different angles: (1) Using Advocacy & Data To

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LATINO 5 A DAY: Helping Communities Face Obesity Head On

The *Latino 5 a Day Campaign*, a state-wide effort led regionally by UC Cooperative Extension, works with Latino communities throughout LA County to promote understanding of the health benefits associated with eating a *variety of* different colored fruits and vegetables.

Latino 5 a Day also promotes physical activity in conjunction with generous fruit and vegetable consumption as vital components of a healthy, active lifestyle that reduces the risk for certain chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

The Campaign empowers Latino families to consume the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables and enjoy at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.

Using the *5 a Day and Physical Activity Toolbox for Community Educators*, group facilitators guide participants

through lessons designed to elicit teamwork as individuals work in small groups to: (1) Identify healthful ways to prepare fruits and vegetables, (2) Explore ways to incorporate *5 a Day* recipes in their daily meal plans, and (3) increase their familiarity with the recommended "serving size" for various fresh, frozen, juiced, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables.



For consumers who are on the go, *Latino 5 a Day* group facilitators encourage exploration of barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption while dining out and at their work places.

Teamwork allows the group to strategize ways to overcome these obstacles and name at least three ways that fruits and vegetables can be added to their lunches and snacks.

Participants also identify effective ways to advocate for improving the availability, access and quality of fruits and vegetables at their local restaurants, workplace cafeterias and communities.

Marvin Espinoza, director of the Los Angeles Regional *Latino & Children's 5 a Day Campaign* says, "*Latino 5 a Day* gives participants the opportunity to understand that they can be the catalyst for change in their communities."

To find out if your organization qualifies to obtain a free *5 a Day and Physical Activity Toolbox for Community Educators*, contact Alejandrina Orozco at 323-260-3828 (orozco@ucdavis.edu.)

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There are fewer healthy food resources in low-income neighborhoods of LA County. For example, a study of over 200 LA neighborhoods found that there are three to four times more supermarkets in mostly white neighborhoods compared to mostly African American ones, and in high-income neighborhoods compared to

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poorer areas. Likewise, restaurants in poor neighborhoods often promote unhealthy food options to local residents.⁴ Research also shows that healthier foods cost more than fatty, high-calorie foods.⁵

The lack of access to safe public spaces makes matters worse. A California study examining physical activity in adolescents reported that youth with access to safe parks engage in regular physical activity more often than those without such access. Yet, one in four California teens do not have access to a safe space for physical activity. This is a particularly pressing issue in urban settings such as LA, where a lack of safe, public parks deters teens from low-income families from engaging in daily physical activity.⁶

The public health community faces the challenge of identifying ways to increase healthier food choices and physical activity levels using approaches that target not only individual behavior but also the environment. For example, measures that **transform schools, workplaces and communities** into spaces that offer an array of healthy food choices and meaningful physical activity can help prevent obesity.

Research and collaborations between academic, community and government groups are needed to study how existing environmental resources and spaces can be transformed into places that facilitate healthier lifestyles choices.

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Fight Obesity, (2) Community-Academic Collaborations: Successes and Pitfalls, (3) Obesity Prevention in the Workplace, and (4) Community Solutions for Obesity: Tailoring To Specific Populations.



Symposium participants roll-up their sleeves and zero-in on complex issues surrounding the obesity epidemic.

At the end of the day, participants recognized that university-community research partnerships can support efforts to (1) develop an evidence base for multi-level interventions, policy changes and advocacy; (2) design, pilot, and test interventions that enhance the cultural competence of health care delivery and disease prevention systems; and (3) generate data to leverage program funding.

Participants called for a systems-level approach to obesity prevention which targets families, children and communities. Therefore, schools, worksites, health care settings and neighborhoods were identified as the institutions of choice for obesity prevention interventions.
