

UC San Diego Researchers Step Up to Fight Childhood Obesity

March 31, 2008 |

S *ee*king Participants for “*Step Up, Size Down*” Study

Childhood obesity is becoming a national epidemic. A key element in curbing this growing problem is a better understanding of how medical providers can help treat and manage pediatric obesity as part of their routine clinical care. In an effort to learn more about how physicians can help young people lose weight, researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Children’s Primary Care Medical Group (CPCMG) in Chula Vista are targeting South Bay youth in a collaborative study called “Step Up, Size Down.”

Study coordinators with PACE (Patient-centered Assessment and Counseling for Exercise and Nutrition) Projects, in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, are seeking overweight adolescents, between the ages of 11 and 13, who:

- → Are examined and referred by a participating CPCMG physician in the Chula Vista area
- → Are considered overweight
- → Are San Diego County residents
- → Have a functioning home phone number
- → Speak and read English
- → Have an English or Spanish speaking parent who will participate with the adolescent
- → Are willing to participate in the study activities for one year
- → Are ready to make some changes and improve their health

The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), will incorporate doctor visits, health education counseling, education about good nutrition and physical activity, follow-up phone calls and parental involvement. No drugs or supplements are used and there is no cost to the participant.

Researchers stress that interested families/participants must be seen by a participating CPCMG physician. This program is not open to outside patients and eligibility to participate will need to be assessed prior to entering the study.

Background

According to statistics from two NIH surveys, in the past two decades the prevalence of overweight children aged 6–11 years has increased from 6.5% to 18.8%; and for those aged 12–19 years, prevalence increased from 5.0% to 17.4%. Overweight adolescents are also more likely to have risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes, than other adolescents.

“Even modest reductions in weight can improve these circumstances and slowing the trajectory of excess weight gain as children get older can also be important,” said principal investigator, Kevin Patrick, M.D., M.S., PACE Projects. “Pediatricians are in an ideal situation to work with children and their parents to address this health problem as they do other health concerns.”

This study will examine the utility of a structured approach to treat overweight children that, if successful, could serve as a model for others to use.

The PACE Research Group is based at the UCSD School of Medicine, Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. PACE research is conducted by an interdisciplinary team of professionals with expertise in preventive medicine, health psychology, exercise sciences, behavioral medicine, nutrition, experimental psychology, computer sciences and engineering, media technology and graphic arts, health promotion, pediatrics, and family medicine.

CPCMG is one of the largest providers of pediatric medical care in San Diego County. Approximately 20 physicians from CPCMG’s Chula Vista practices are expected to participate in this project.

For more information, please call or email the study coordinator at: 858-457-7282 or 1-866-667-7223 (toll free) or teenpacestudy@paceproject.org.

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