

UC San Diego Experts Lead Local Coalition in Landmark 21-year Child Health Study

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Kimberly Edwards

The University of California, San Diego (UC San Diego) School of Medicine, partnering with San Diego State University, the First 5 Commission and the San Diego County Department of Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has been selected as a study center in the National Children's Study (NCS), the largest study of child and human health ever conducted in the nation. The NCS, sponsored by several federal agencies, is a massive long-term project that will identify 105,000 children before birth and follow them until age 21.

This historic project will create a nationwide database allowing for the evaluation of some of the common and rare disorders of childhood that seem to be increasing at epidemic rates: preterm birth, obesity, asthma, diabetes, ADHD, autism and more. The local coalition will recruit 1,000 participants in San Diego County and collect data to assess the effects of environmental and genetic factors on child and human health.

"The only way to answer questions about the most pressing and common child health problems in an appropriate and timely fashion is through a study of this scale," noted Gabriel Haddad, M.D., Chair of the UC San Diego Department of Pediatrics. "This collaboration will create a national treasure trove of biological samples; concrete, specific and precise data; and a wonderful opportunity to answer questions that haven't even occurred to us."

"This is an unparalleled collaboration and our institutions have an important role to contribute to this study," said UC San Diego Principal Investigator, Christina D. Chambers, Ph.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Family and Preventive Medicine, UCSD School of Medicine. "We bring unique expertise, not only regarding pregnancy exposure and outcomes and children's health but we also offer a unique environment. We are a border community with long-term experience dealing with prenatal and child health concerns and cross border issues."

The announcement today names 22 new Study Centers across the United States to be added to the nationwide collaborative, which began in 2005 with establishment of seven centers. As one of the first seven Vanguard Centers, the University of California, Irvine has been working on the NCS for two years. The additional funding announced today will establish the Southern California Study Center (SOCA) which includes participation of UC San Diego, San Diego State University; CSU San Bernardino and Loma Linda University; USC and Cedar Sinai Hospital; the First 5 Commissions of each county; and the County Health Departments of each location.

The San Diego coalition will begin study operations in 2007, and will deliver some of the first outcome measures of the NCS, available as early as 2010, centering around environmental effects on birth outcomes including physical anomalies.

Chambers, a perinatal epidemiologist whose research focuses on environmental causes of adverse pregnancy outcomes, will lead a team of eight UC San Diego co-investigators including: Thomas Moore, M.D. and Maryam Tarsa, M.D., of the Department of Reproductive Medicine; Neil Finer, M.D. and Lisa Stellwagen, M.D. in the Division of Neonatology, Department of Pediatrics; Howard Taras, M.D., Dean Sidelinger, M.D., and Shelia

Broyles, Ph.D., in the Division of Community Pediatrics, Department of Pediatrics; and Kenneth Lyons Jones, M.D., Division of Dysmorphology/Teratology in the Department of Pediatrics, a renowned pediatrician and birth defects researcher and one of two doctors who identified fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).

Background

The National Children's Study is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The study began in response to the Children's Health Act of 2000, when Congress directed the NICHD and other federal agencies to undertake a national, long-term study of children's health and development in relation to environmental exposures. The Vanguard centers were established in 2005 (UC Irvine). Eventually, there will be 105 NCS locations (12 in California), each identifying and following 1,000 children.

The new study centers were selected based on rigorous criteria: a strong ability to collect data for the study, the ability to build extensive community networks for recruiting eligible women and newborns, and a demonstrated capability to protect the privacy of the information collected. The centers will begin hiring and training staff, meeting with local community groups and health care professionals to inform them about the study and forming community advisory boards to inform communities about the developments in a range of study-related issues.

Additional Information

DVD copies of b-roll footage are available to complement your coverage. UCSD and other San Diego coalition experts are available for comment.

Visit the National Children's Study site at <http://www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov>.

Satellite and radio media briefings, featuring key NCS spokespeople, will be conducted on October 5, 2007. For more information on the satellite tour please contact Robert Bock or Marianne Glass Miller, NICHD Communications Office (301)496-5133.

Media Contact: Kimberly Edwards, (619)543-6163