



center for children's healthy lifestyles & nutrition

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CHILDREN'S MERCY AND KUMC LAUNCH JOINT CHILDHOOD OBESITY CENTER

KANSAS CITY, MO – Oct. 24, 2011 Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and the University of Kansas Medical Center are joining forces to treat and prevent the number one health danger facing children today – pediatric obesity.

The two institutions have established the Center for Children's Healthy Lifestyles & Nutrition, a research center focused on becoming a leading voice in the local, regional and national movement to prevent and treat childhood obesity. The center will seek to contribute new knowledge regarding pediatric obesity and nutrition, ranging in scope from its biological origins to its societal impact.

“We are committed to reaching all children in our area, especially those in underserved, ethnic minority, low-income communities and in assisting others to do so,” said Ann Davis, Ph.D., MPH, a pediatric psychologist at KUMC and co-director of the new center.

“Our new center is poised to serve as a leader for pediatric obesity research in the Midwest and as a centralized resource for community members, academic and business leaders who are interested in arresting the current rates of childhood obesity,” said Gregory Kearns, Pharm.D., Ph.D., chairman of the Department of Medical Research at Children's Mercy and the center's other co-director.

Meredith Dreyer, Ph.D., a pediatric psychologist at Children's Mercy, serves as the center's associate director and Sarah Hampl, M.D., director of the Weight Management Program at Children's Mercy, is the center's medical director. The center is housed in the Donald Chisholm Center at Children's Mercy and includes faculty members from KUMC, Children's Mercy and the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The new Center for Children's Healthy Lifestyles & Nutrition already has a number of research and treatment programs underway:

- Healthy Schools Project investigates the best methods to treat pediatric obesity among rural children and their families.

- The Feeding Team is a multi-site research program which assesses feeding protocols for the treatment of young children who refuse to eat orally and are sustained by feedings via tube.
- Zoom to Health is a six-week intervention program to provide parenting skills and nutrition education to parents of children age 2 to 8 who are overweight or obese.
- Drink Smart is conducted in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics to develop, implement and evaluate a public awareness campaign to assist parents in offering their toddlers and pre-schoolers healthy drink options.
- Primary care provider counseling is a research-based program which examines the prevalence of pediatrician counseling for childhood obesity.
- The Special Needs Weight Management Program is one of the first in the country to provide a comprehensive intervention targeted at children with special needs who are also obese.
- Translational research exploring the impact of obesity on drug disposition and effect with an emphasis on medications being used to treat conditions associated with obesity, such as diabetes and hyperlipidemia.

The Center for Children’s Healthy Lifestyles & Nutrition also incorporates the obesity treatment programs offered at the two institutions – Healthy Hawks at KUMC and Zoom to Health and Promoting Health in Teens and Kids (PHIT Kids) at Children’s Mercy. All treatment programs include components designed to reach culturally and socioeconomically diverse populations.

The new center also is home to the Kansas City Childhood Obesity Collaborative – Weighing In, a community-based effort including research-based components. Weighing In is supported by Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and includes more than 90 community organizations.

Finally, both Children’s Mercy and KUMC are actively recruiting new faculty members whose research focuses in the fields of obesity and eating disorders. These positions include an endowed chair in Pediatric Nutrition Research at Children’s Mercy and one assistant professor and one associate professor position to be recruited to the faculty of the KU School of Medicine.

“Both Children’s Mercy and KUMC have been doing innovative and effective research and treatment in the area of childhood obesity for a number of years,” said Dr. Kearns. “This new joint collaboration will allow us to dramatically expand and enhance our efforts and to continue moving forward to ensure the healthy lifestyles and nutrition of all children in our region.”

Dr. Davis agreed. “There has historically been a great deal of support in our community for efforts in which two leading institutions, Children’s Mercy and KU Med, work together. We are excited to be a very successful example of this partnership – especially regarding such an important health problem.”