

**HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH  
ROUND 5**

Awards to 9 sites on 11-15-2010, totaling \$1.5 million  
Program Director: Mary Story, PhD, RD

---

**SUMMARY****Program Purpose:**

*Healthy Eating Research* is a national program that supports research on environmental and policy strategies to promote healthy eating among children to prevent childhood obesity, especially among lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk for obesity.

**Examining Rewards-Based Incentives for Fruit and Vegetable Purchases by Lower-Income Families**

Albert Einstein Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA

Principal Investigator: Etienne Phipps, PhD

Co-Principal Investigator: Nadine Uplinger, RD, MS, MHA

Incentives that reward healthier food purchases and that provide reinforcement to the consumer have not been systematically and rigorously studied, particularly among lower-income populations. The aim of this study is to determine whether an incentive-based system increases healthier food purchasing practices by lower-income families. The study is a randomized controlled trial of 70 adult supermarket shoppers in Northwest Philadelphia who have at least one child 5 to 16 years of age living in the home. Participants randomized to the incentive arm have the opportunity to accumulate market dollars for a supermarket-based gift card, based on their purchases of fruits and vegetables. There are four phases of the study: 1) 8-week baseline purchase history; 2) 8-week active intervention; 3) 6-week tapering of the intervention; and (4) 6-week follow-up. Electronic supermarket data will be collected via frequent shopper cards, and participants will be interviewed at the beginning and the end of the study. This study will yield important data for community and policy stakeholders about the use of this form of incentive and its potential to increase healthier food purchasing practices in lower-income households.

**Defining Priorities and Optimal Research Designs for Studying the Impact of Digital Food Marketing on Adolescents**

American University, Washington, DC

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Montgomery, MA, PhD

Co-Principal Investigator: Sonya Grier, PhD

Few studies have examined adolescent exposure to food marketing. This research gap is compounded by the dearth of academic studies of digital food marketing, especially regarding adolescents, who are exposed to increased food and beverage marketing on the Internet, cell phones and other digital platforms. Recent developments at the federal level reflect growing

concerns that adolescents must be included in regulatory and self-regulatory policies. Research is urgently needed to guide policies. The aims of this project are to: 1) establish an interdisciplinary network of scholars to focus on the unique research issues related to digital food marketing to multicultural adolescents; and 2) identify methods and metrics used to capture the ways in which adolescents interact with and respond to digital media. In addition to the interdisciplinary network, the project will also yield a research agenda focused specifically on adolescents, including recommended methods and detail on new metrics of youth engagement with digital media that can be adapted for further academic research.

### **Assessing the Effects of the Federal Commodities Program on School Meals for Children in Lower-Income Communities**

California Food Policy Advocates Inc., Oakland, CA

Principal Investigator: Kenneth Hecht, LLB

It is important to examine how the national school meal programs, which feed roughly half the country's school-age population every school day, can contribute to preventing childhood obesity. Although the USDA's Child Nutrition Commodity Program offers many nutritious options to school districts, previous research has shown that schools primarily order foods high in fat that fail to meet standards set by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In addition, previously unexamined aspects of the commodity program may also affect the nutritional quality and cost of the school meal, such as the practice of diverting food to commercial food processors before delivery to schools. This study will identify policy opportunities to ensure that schools use commodity foods to offer the most nutritious meals at the lowest cost. The study will compare the nutrient profiles of commodity foods processed into heat-and-serve entrees with entrees prepared on site from minimally processed commodities (scratch cooked), identify cost differences between the two methods, and examine differences in the overall nutritional quality of menus served in districts using heat-and-serve versus scratch-cooked entrees. Working with 10 California school districts, the investigators will conduct nutrient analyses, an econometric cost analysis, key informant interviews, and a convening of experts and policy-makers for the presentation of the study's findings and the development of policy recommendations.

### **Examining Whether Cause Marketing by Soda Companies Mimics Tobacco-Industry Strategies to Thwart Regulation**

Public Health Institute, Berkeley, CA

Principal Investigator: Lori Dorfman, DrPH, MPH

The sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) industry is increasingly using corporate social responsibility campaigns—particularly cause marketing appeals via social media—to reach young people. The purpose of this study is to assess how the current cause marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns of the SSB industry compare to the strategies articulated and practiced by the tobacco industry. The project includes content analysis of the SSB industry's social media and CSR campaigns, public relations materials issued to support them, financial and regulatory statements detailing the campaigns, and news and trade press coverage of these actions. Investigators will examine: tobacco industry documents that discuss the industry's CSR strategies; the SSB and tobacco industry's corporate and shareholders' reports and their respective regulatory filings; current CSR campaigns using social media from SSB

industry leaders Coca-Cola and Pepsi; trade press coverage of these campaigns; and a nationally representative sample of the news coverage pertaining to the SSB industry's social media cause marketing and CSR campaigns. The main outcome of this research will be: 1) a comprehensive case study of recent SSB industry CSR and cause marketing campaigns; 2) a systematic review of the nature and extent of linkages between the SSB and the tobacco industry's CSR strategies and campaigns; and 3) a comprehensive description of how food and beverage social media marketing works in contemporary efforts to target young people.

### **Evaluating Marketing Strategies to Increase the Purchase of Healthy Foods in Lower-Income Communities**

Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Principal Investigator: Gary Foster, PhD

There is increased attention and funding to policies that can increase the presence of supermarkets in lower-income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods. While having access to a wide variety of foods is a basic human right, little is known about what purchases are made in supermarkets in these areas and the factors that influence them. The aims of this research are to: 1) establish a data sharing mechanism with a supermarket chain in Philadelphia to identify where profit-neutral substitutions (healthier for less healthy) could be made; 2) conduct interviews with retailers to assess the feasibility of marketing specific healthier product substitutions among lower-income ethnically diverse shoppers; and 3) develop and evaluate marketing strategies to increase the purchase of healthier products. Investigators will compare, for each of three product categories, sales of healthier products in an intervention and comparison store.

### **Examining the Effects of Industry Self-Regulation on Televised Food Ads Seen by Children**

University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

Principal Investigator: Dale Kunkel, MA, PhD

Televised food advertising to children has long been dominated by low-nutrient, high-calorie products. In response to public and policy-maker concern, 16 of the nation's largest food conglomerates participate in a self-regulatory initiative in an effort to improve the nutritional quality of foods advertised to children, known as the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI). This study will include a content analysis to evaluate the impact of the CFBAI on the overall nutritional quality of foods advertised on television to children. Previous studies employing identical content-based measures were conducted in 2005, well before any self-regulatory efforts began, and in 2009, after the CFBAI was fully implemented. The most recent 2009 findings indicate that industry self-regulation resulted in little improvement in the nutritional quality of advertised foods, despite the fact that companies generally complied with their pledges. This new research will gather additional data in 2011 to assess the adequacy of industry self-regulation at meeting several policy goals, including achievement of significant improvements in the overall nutritional quality of foods marketed to children, and an end to the use of licensed characters to promote unhealthy foods. The study will classify the nutritional quality of foods advertised on television to children using a food rating system devised by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("Go-Slow-Whoa").

## **Improving Nutritional Quality of Foods Distributed to Lower-Income Families Through Emergency Food Services**

University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

Principal Investigator: Karen Webb, PhD

A 2010 study found that there has been a 46% increase since 2005 in the reliance on emergency food by families in need. Surprisingly little is known about the nutritional quality of the food inventory of food bank or pantry programs on which the majority of emergency food clients rely. Adoption of food bank nutrition policies is emerging as one approach to obtain organizational commitment to change. In this study, investigators will document the changes these policies are able to achieve in terms of improved nutritional quality of foods provided. The study has four phases: Phase 1 includes an online survey of U.S. food banks to examine the prevalence and scope of nutrition policies in their organizations; and Phases 2-4 comprise an in-depth comparison study of six selected California food banks (three with nutrition policies and three without), 30 food pantries affiliated with these food banks, and 450 clients attending these food pantries. Investigators will document and compare the nutritional quality of food inventory at food banks over the past three years, and organizational practices at food banks and food pantries regarding provision of healthy foods.

## **Examining the Effects of School Drinking-Water Policies and Practices on Student Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages in California**

University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

Principal Investigator: Anisha Patel, MD, MSPH, MSHS

Co-Principal Investigator: Kenneth Hecht, LLB

Few U.S. studies have investigated school drinking water access and policies and practices related to school drinking water. This project will investigate drinking water availability, policies and practices, and barriers to implementing programs and policies to improve drinking water access and intake in California public schools. If pending California state legislation to improve drinking water access in school cafeterias passes, these study results can be used to examine the impact of this legislation in a subsequent study, provide valuable information for schools mandated to implement drinking water programs under law and inform future policy efforts. The specific aims of the study are to: 1) develop a valid tool to assess drinking water availability, water-related policies and practices, and barriers to school water program and policy implementation; 2) collect survey data to describe these factors and how they vary by school characteristics; and 3) disseminate these findings to policy-makers, school administrators and public health officials.

## **Measuring the Impact of Menu Labeling in Schools on Student Food Choices**

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Principal Investigator: Donna Johnson, RD, PhD

Point-of-purchase nutrition labeling policies are proposed as a mechanism to increase awareness of nutrient content, modify food selection decisions, reduce selections of energy dense foods and increase selections of nutrient dense foods. School meal programs offer an opportunity to extend these benefits to children, especially lower-income children, but there has been little research to

support the efficacy of nutrition labeling in schools. This project will take advantage of the planned introduction of a new electronic nutrition labeling initiative in Northshore School District high schools in Washington state to measure the impact of calorie labeling independently and in combination with education about calories in health classes. This study will be a quasi-experimental longitudinal study to determine the behavioral and nutritional impact of the two-phase intervention. The aims are to: 1) determine if adding point-of-purchase calorie information to foods sold in high school cafeterias is associated with changes in total energy, energy density or nutrient density of student food choices; 2) examine the impact that education directed at informing high school students about the meaning of calories and individual caloric needs, in conjunction with calorie labeling, has on food choices in a high school cafeteria; and 3) explore how and why students use calorie information in school cafeterias.