Childhood Obesity: A Growing Problem

Georgia Regents University (GRU) is a statewide and nationwide leader in the battle against childhood obesity and its consequences, the number one preventable health risk facing Georgia and the United States.

Prevalence of Childhood Obesity

- In 2010, over a third of children and adolescents (approximately 13 million) were overweight or obese
- The prevalence of obesity has increased threefold in the last two decades
- 37 percent of children ages 10 to 17 in Georgia are overweight or obese (11th worst nationwide)

Consequences of Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity leads to the premature development of many diseases that were once considered "adult" diseases, such as:

- Cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Bone and joint problems
- Sleep apnea
- Social and psychological problems, such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem

This results in an annual cost of $2.1 million in Georgia.

GRU is a Leader in Childhood Obesity Research

- $38 million dollars in continuous state, local and state funding over last 14 years
- Novel interventions such as teaching an obese expectant mother how to increase her activity level that translates into greater activity levels and lower weight gain of her baby
- Studies that compare doses of daily physical activity and show that 20 minutes per day is enough to reduce diabetes risk and improve fitness in obese youth
- Studies that show the positive impact of daily exercise on math achievement
- Novel laboratory studies that are showing gender differences on the effect of obesity on the mechanisms underlying cardiovascular risk in youth
- New insight into the impact of obesity on bone development in youth
- New insights into the relative contribution of genetic and environmental factors in the development of childhood obesity and its consequences

The Future

GRU is committed to reducing the prevalence of childhood obesity in the state of Georgia and nationwide. Our unique experience and expertise allows us to develop novel prevention programs and at the same time identify mechanisms underlying obesity-induced diseases.

September 2013
"This paper expresses the views of Georgia Regents University. While we routinely coordinate with the University System of Georgia, we cannot officially speak on their behalf."