

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

New Pilot Study to Enroll Children, Grandchildren of Jackson Heart Study Participants for Research into Obesity, Diabetes

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JACKSON, Miss. – The Jackson Heart Study moves into its next generation this week with a new feasibility study in children and grandchildren of original JHS participants.

The Jackson Heart KIDS Study will officially begin with a ceremony and health fair Wednesday at the Jackson Medical Mall.

Researchers plan to enroll about 200 Jackson-area African-American youths ages 12-19 in the year-long study. They will focus on the development of risks for obesity, diabetes and other metabolic conditions.

If the feasibility study shows promise, researchers may apply for federal grants to fund a longer-term version.

“JHS KIDS would be the first prospective, longitudinal cohort study of African-American youth in the Southern United States to examine sensitive developmental and transition periods and their associations in the development of obesity and metabolic-related risk factors,” said Dr. Warren A. Jones, the new study’s director and head of the University of Mississippi Medical Center Institute for Improvement of Geographic Minority Health.

JHS KIDS is funded by a \$200,000 grant from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development. UMMC and Wake Forest University are collaborating on the study. Dr. Bettina Beech, Wake Forest professor of pediatrics and social sciences & health policy, is the study’s principal investigator.

The alarming national rate of childhood obesity prompted researchers planning JHS KIDS to focus on the growing problem.

According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 31.9 percent of children and adolescents are overweight and 16.3 percent are obese.

Additionally, one in five African-American children is obese, the examination survey found. In the past five years, the number of African-American children with diabetes has increased tenfold. Obesity is a known contributor to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type-2 diabetes.

The American Heart Association recommended that obesity and heart-disease studies focus on weight changes over time, especially differences between childhood versus younger and older adult weight gains.

As such, the JHS KIDS is designed to help researchers examine behaviors that may influence obesity and subsequent chronic disease risk among African-Americans.

Participants in JHS KIDS will receive a baseline exam and a follow-up at six months. Researchers will sort the data to estimate risk for overweight, obesity and related health problems. The data would also serve as baseline measures for a future, full-scale study.

The JHS KIDS kickoff will include a Family Health Fair at the Jackson Medical Mall on July 25 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. A program beginning at noon will feature speakers from the UMMC vice chancellor's office, the Jackson mayor's office and the Mississippi governor's office. WLBT News Anchor Maggie Wade will serve as master of ceremonies.

The event will also feature a fitness demonstration for adults and children, and the signing of a charter for the Celebrating African-American Families campaign by pastors from participating churches. Through the health fair, the campaign will recognize the strength, resilience, and importance of African-American families.

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