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*Salud America! Awards Grants for Research on Latino Childhood Obesity
Research will evaluate, inform policies and programs
that aim to reverse obesity among Latino youths*

SAN ANTONIO, July 6, 2009—*Salud America!* announced today the recipients of 20 pilot grants, each up to \$75,000, for research on reducing and preventing obesity among Latino youths. *Salud America!* is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children and is based at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Salud America! grantees are a mix of well-established and junior-level researchers from universities, health institutes and community health groups in 12 states.

Among many other issues, the grants will examine:

- The impact of an effort by the Los Angeles County Public Health Department, restaurants and community-based organizations to provide South Los Angeles residents with more access to healthy foods and nutrition information;
- The early outcomes of Healthy Tomorrow for Teens, a five-year program in Connecticut that aims to increase healthy eating, physical activity and leadership skills among Latino adolescent girls; and
- The efficacy of two community-based exercise programs—BOUNCE and ReBOUNCE—for physical activity and weight control among Latina mothers and their “tween” daughters in Houston.

“These researchers will work closely with Latino populations to make a meaningful impact on policy and environmental changes that can help reverse childhood obesity,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the Health Science Center. “This is critical work given the alarming prevalence of obesity and overweight among Latino children and adolescents.”

Latino youths suffer disproportionately from obesity. Data show that 38 percent of Mexican-American children and adolescents are overweight or obese—more than whites or African Americans.

But research is lacking on effective interventions that focus on Latino communities.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) established *Salud America!* in 2007 with a five-year, \$5.2-million grant to bridge this research gap. The program also aims to

increase the number of researchers seeking policy and environmental solutions to childhood obesity among Latinos.

“There must be real urgency in addressing the obesity epidemic among Latino children, who are part of the largest, youngest and fastest-growing minority group in the United States,” said James S. Marks, RWJF senior vice president and health group director. “This new research will inform our work and accelerate the momentum needed for Latino children to lead healthier lives.”

Since its inception, *Salud America!* has formed a national advisory committee consisting of 23 nationally recognized experts on the issue and has recruited more than 1,375 academics, researchers, community leaders and policy-makers for its network. In summer 2008, more than 300 of those members participated in the process that helped establish the program’s research agenda and led to the pilot-grant funding.

RWJF awarded the two-year grants following the national advisory committee’s rigorous review of 90 applications. They begin in July.

“These grants are a vital step in the advancement of scientific knowledge about obesity among Latino children,” Dr. Ramirez said. “We’re excited to be able to generate research and groom researchers on such an acute health issue.”

The 20 funded projects will be led by:

- Dr. Shari Barkin, Vanderbilt University Medical Center
- Dr. Cristina Barroso, University of Texas School of Public Health, Brownsville
- Dr. Alexy Arauz Boudreau, Massachusetts General Hospital
- Dr. Dina Castro, University of North Carolina
- Dr. Dharma Cortes, Mauricio Gaston Institute, The University of Massachusetts Boston
- Dr. Robert W. Dudley, Community Health Center, Inc., Connecticut
- Dr. Claudia L. Galindo, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Dr. Zan Gao, University of Utah
- Dr. Meizi He, University of Texas at San Antonio
- Dr. Harris Huberman, The State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center
- Dr. Rebecca London, Stanford University School of Education
- Dr. Nelda Mier, Texas A&M Health Science Center
- Dr. Carmen Nevarez, Public Health Institute, California
- Dr. Norma Olvera, University of Houston
- Dr. Javier Rosado, Florida State University
- Dr. Emma Sanchez, University of California, San Francisco
- Dr. Monika Stodolska, University of Illinois

- Dr. Myriam E. Torres, University of South Carolina Research Foundation
- Dr. Miriam Y. Vega, Latino Commission on AIDS, New York
- Dr. Angela R. Wiley, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

More details, including project titles for each of the new pilot grants, are available at: www.salud-america.org/research.html.

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Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino researchers, policy-makers and community leaders engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.