



NIHCM
FOUNDATION

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**National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation**  
**Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health Update**  
**March 2007**  
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**NIHCM Foundation Activities**  
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On March 14, 2007, **NIHCM Foundation** convened health plan foundation directors and select health plan medical directors for a Roundtable Discussion entitled, "Priorities in Children's Health: Childhood Obesity." *Roland Sturm, PhD*, Senior Economist at RAND Corporation and *William Dietz, MD, PhD*, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity educated participants with current research on childhood obesity. The bulk of the session engaged participants in a peer dialogue about their foundations' child health funding priorities as well as best practices and lessons learned in their own childhood obesity activities. Dr. Dietz concluded the day with a summary of the day's discussions including next steps for foundations in addressing the significant threat of obesity to children's health.

NIHCM Foundation, in collaboration with *Dana Hughes, DrPH* of UCSF's Institute for Health Policy Studies, released a paper in February 2007 entitled, "Reducing Health Disparities Among Children: Strategies and Programs for Health Plans." The paper describes the roots of health disparities; discusses significant health disparities among children; presents two case examples, asthma and obesity; provides an overview of potential solutions; and concludes by describing eight health plan initiatives to address children's health disparities. The paper is available for download at http://www.nihcm.org/finalweb/pg_mch_publications.htm

NIHCM Foundation, in collaboration with *William Dietz, MD, PhD*, Director of CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, and *Howell Wechsler, PhD, MPH*, Director of CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health, produced and published a paper, "Health Plans' Role in Preventing Overweight in Children and Adolescents," in Health Affairs' March/ April 2007 thematic issue on children's health. The paper describes the role of U.S. health plans in promoting evidence-based behavioral-change strategies in the both medical and community settings.

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## **Supporting Effective Asthma Management**

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The [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\)](#) released an evidence report, "[Closing The Quality Gap: A Critical Analysis of Quality Improvement Strategies: Volume 5—Asthma Care.](#)" The report documents good evidence for strategies that teach patients to self-manage and self-monitor their disease. Parental/caregiver involvement for young children and school nurse/school personnel involvement for school-aged children proved more effective than having the children manage their disease independently. The most effective strategies are those designed to change patient behavior, provide repeated sessions with health care providers over an extended period of time, and use multiple methods of instruction. Additionally, the use of multiple strategies may yield greater improvement in symptoms.

The [Maternal and Child Health Library](#) at Georgetown University released a new edition of [Knowledge Path: Asthma in Children and Adolescents](#). The electronic guide, designed for use by health professionals and families, provides links to current, high-quality resources about childhood and adolescent asthma as well as its impact on homes, schools, and communities. Also included are sign-up links for pediatric asthma research email listserves.

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## **Efforts to Improve Adolescent Health**

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"[A Study of Interactions: Emerging Issues in the Science of Adolescence Workshop Summary \(2006\)](#)" provides an overview of the major themes in adolescent health research and includes a discussion of future goals in the field. The volume, produced and published by the [National Research Council](#) and the [Institute of Medicine](#), summarizes a two-day conference convened by the two groups to review emerging transdisciplinary research in adolescent health and to discuss future research to better understand the various interdisciplinary connections concerned with adolescence.

[Incenter Strategies](#), an affiliate of the [Maternal and Child Health Policy Research Center](#), provides education, research, policy analysis, and technical assistance to improve the way adolescent health care is structured and financed. Incenter released four new publications: "[Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Adolescent Health and Access to Care](#)" (fact sheet), "[Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health and Access to Care Among Older Adolescents](#)" (companion fact sheet), "[Making the Case for Addressing Adolescent Health Care](#)" (fact sheet), and "[Preliminary Thoughts on Restructuring Medicaid to Promote Adolescent Health](#)" (issue brief). The organization is also engaged in surveying pediatricians and adolescent medicine specialists in two areas: 1) preferences and requirements for practice capacity expansion to care for adolescents and 2) recommendations on financial and organizational arrangements to improve adolescent health medical education.

Research published in the February issue of the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#) demonstrates that most adolescents do not practice health habits that meet national physical or dietary guidelines. Between 2000-2001, 878 youth aged 11 to 15 self-reported data on their physical activity level, television viewing time, fat consumption, and fruit and vegetable intake. Subsequent analysis revealed: 55% of youth did not meet physical activity guidelines, 30% watched more than 2 hours of television per day, 68% surpassed recommended fat consumption, and merely 12% met the recommended fruit and vegetable threshold. Examining all four parameters, only 2% met the recommended levels while over 80% presented multiple risk behaviors. Males engaged in more physical activity than females, and older and overweight children were less likely to adopt healthy behaviors.

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**Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health: New Resources**  
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The [Center for Young Women's Health](#) offers a website replete with health information relevant to adolescent girls, young adult women and their parents, in both English and Spanish. Specific topics include: Nutrition & Fitness, Sexuality & Health, Health & Development, Gynecology, and Emotional Health. The website also includes quizzes, a calendar of upcoming young women's health events, an online chat forum, printable resources for healthcare providers, and an email listserve sign-up page. The Center is a collaboration between the [Division of Adolescent & Young Adult Medicine](#) and the [Division of Gynecology](#) at the Children's Hospital of Boston.

The [National Survey of Children' Health](#) (NSCH), funded by the [Maternal and Child Health Bureau](#) (MCHB) and the [National Center for Health Statistics](#) (NCHS), collects information on a broad range of child health and well-being topics through a bilingual telephone survey of children aged 0-17 years. The [Data Resources Center for Child & Adolescent Health's](#) website permits viewers to learn about the survey, search data, report results and view preset state data profiles.

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**Mental Health: Research and Recommendations**  
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The [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#) published a dedicated Supplement on the [prevention of depression in children and adolescents](#), emphasizing major depressive disorder. While not a comprehensive overview of research in the field, the supplement does include many of the challenges and opportunities for reducing the burden of depression in these populations including: risk and protective factors, models of depression prevention, the economic burden of depression in children and adolescents, the impact of depression-prevention programs, and translational research opportunities.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) released a report and accompanying paper to be published in [Pediatrics](#) documenting an increase in suicide rate among young Americans. According to the report, between 2003 and 2004, the suicide rate for youth under age 20 increased by 18%; suicide was the only cause of death for teens that increased during that time period; and most of the suicides occurred in older teens. Mental health experts speculate whether this may be attributable to a decrease in antidepressant use; during the same time period, the [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) called for a black box warning on antidepressants indicating an increased risk of suicide in children with their use. The data are preliminary, and the CDC will release a more detailed report in 1-2 months.

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services](#) (CMHS) released its latest compendium which includes recent [Institute of Medicine](#) recommendations for coordinated primary, mental health, and substance use care, and the application of quality improvement to the mental health field. Specifically, "[Mental Health, United States, 2004](#)", introduces the quality-improvement model and its application to mental health care, reviews essential measures for quality improvement initiatives, describes the role of mental health care in primary care settings, examines different methods of identifying individuals with mental illness, and presents annual survey results from the CMHS [National Mental Health Statistical Reporting Program](#).

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**Health Plan Initiatives**  
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A collaboration between Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, the Newark Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) and the Eliza Corporation, has increased Newark city childhood immunization rates by 30% since 2002. Using Eliza Corporation's automated speech recognition system, Newark families with children aged 2-18 months receive reminder telephone calls engaging them in a personalized conversation about the importance of immunization. Members receive calls within 2 weeks of their child's 2-month, 4-month, 6-month, 12-month, and 15-month anniversaries. Since the inception of the Project Vaccinate Quality Partnership in 2003, 47,700 calls have been placed, increasing the Newark childhood immunization rate from 57.5% to 75% (as of 2005), nearly reaching the statewide average of 78.2%.

Highmark Foundation recently awarded \$1.3 million in grants. Three of the 5 grantees will focus specifically on improving maternal and child health: *Butler Memorial Hospital (Butler County, Pennsylvania)* will contribute funds toward a Maternal Services Program that provides medical, nutritional, home health and follow-up care free of charge to low-income and uninsured women and their children from 0-5 years of age; *Sudden Infant Death Services (S.I.D.S.) of Pennsylvania (Allegheny County)* received a three-year grant to hire a community services coordinator to expand the Cribs for Kids safe sleep education program, an educational media campaign, to rural and underserved communities throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania; *Somerset Hospital (Somerset County, Pennsylvania)* received funding to support a program that provides concussion screening and athletic training for students in grades 7-12.

To assist with medical services not fully covered by health insurance, the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation is offering grants of up to \$5,000. The types of services covered by the grants include speech therapy, physical therapy and psychotherapy sessions; medical equipment such as wheelchairs, braces, hearing aids and eyeglasses; and orthodontia and dental treatments. The foundation has already provided one million dollars in financial assistance to over 375 families. To be eligible, children must be 16 years or younger and families must meet income guidelines, reside in the United States, and be enrolled in a commercial health plan.

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**Alliance for Improving Maternal and Child Health (AIM) Activities**  
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NIHCM Foundation is part of the Alliance for Improving Maternal and Child Health (AIM), a collaborative comprised of 17 national membership organizations representing decision makers within state and local government, maternal and child health (MCH) professions, foundations, the health insurance industry, and business, as well as advocates for families. As part of this effort, NIHCM occasionally highlights the publications and activities of the other organizations participating in the collaborative.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the Children's Dental Health Project seek support in getting out the message: "dental disease, while wholly preventable, continues to be the most common chronic disease of children." Recent data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) revealed a marked increase (15.2%) in dental decay prevalence rates among children aged 2 to 5 years. Critical to resolving this problem is educating women, especially by promoting the importance of oral health and regular dental

care during the perinatal period and in young children by age 1. Primary care visits permit maternal oral health assessments, education interventions and referral for routine dental care thereby promoting coordinated, multi-disciplinary, family-centered health care. For additional information on *Improving Perinatal and Infant Oral Health*, please visit <http://www.cdhp.org/Projects/PPMCHResources.asp>

CityMatCH will host it's 17th Annual Urban MCH Leadership Conference, "Building the Best Environments for Families and Children", from August 26-28 in Denver, Colorado. Registration will open after May 1, 2007. For more information, please visit <http://www.citymatch.org/Conferences/index.htm>.

NIHCM Foundation is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of America's health care system. The Foundation conducts research, policy analysis and educational activities on a range of health care issues. It fosters dialogue between the private health care industry and the public sector to find workable solutions to health system problems. Detailed information about the Foundation's projects and publications is available on our newly designed web site, <http://www.nihcm.org>.

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