



## SPRING Seminar Series

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*The California Experience with Changing the Food Environment:  
From Research to State Policy*

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- Vancouver: Goal to be the healthiest city to host the Olympics
  - McDonald's and Coca Cola ads most memorable. Didn't accomplish goal?
- **Berkley Longitudinal Nutrition Study (BLNS) 1969-1984**
  - Tracked adiposity in babies. Learned importance of attrition when conducting longitudinal study.
- **NHLBI Growth & Health Study (NGHS) 1987-1997**
  - Tracked obesity and cardiovascular risks in white and black girls to identify social and psychological correlates of these risk factors
  - Kept 90% of participants. Study still in progress because able to keep participants who are now in their 30s. Great data set.
- Nutritionists look at nutrients, but food industry can fortify any junk food
- Established **The Center for Weight & Health** in 1999
  - Mission to provide people with science and information about nutrition and obesity
- New developments occurring at the same time
- **The California Endowment:** Led by Marion Standish who was very interested in chronic diseases. Realized don't have money to treat all these disease; we need to focus on changing policies.
- **Alice Waters** begins **The Edible School Yard**

- Meanwhile **Harold Goldstein** founded **California Center for Public Health Advocacy**. Wondered where the policy around prevention was. Found a way to get the public health association to give him \$5,000 to start an organization that would lobby.
- **Larry Cohen** founded the **Prevention Institute**
  - Spectrum of prevention: Necessary to influence all levels to achieve policy change. Good model to think about what we are doing in various areas. Useful for interventions and prevention.
- **Michael Pollan** wrote his bestselling book, *The Botany of Desire*
- The Center's first project: **FitWIC Child Obesity Initiative**
  - 5-state intervention
  - Craft obesity intervention strategies
  - In California, had to shift the plan. Chose three WIC agencies to work with. Developed intervention and trained the staff. Much of the staff was overweight. Switched program to a worksite wellness.
  - Today, California is rolling out the biggest worksite wellness program. Staff members are excited about it and believe it will make a difference.
  - Submitted final report to Congress. Even though WIC focuses on nutrition, included physical activity message.
  - Rolling out program across the nation
- **Determinants of Energy Imbalance**: Study reviewed literature to determine the relationship between food and childhood obesity
- **Study: Soda out of Schools**: Took soda out of two high schools and looked at feasibility
- Renamed center **The Dr. Robert C. & Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health** and redefined mission: To determine critical gaps in the field, conduct relevant research, and disseminate results to the community
- Success story that shows impact of center:
  - Back in the early days of the center, there was a newspaper article on fast food in schools. Discussed how cafeterias looked like fast food restaurants. The chair of the California health committee was wondering what she could do to prevent diabetes because her Latino district had the highest rates of diabetes in the state. She saw this newspaper article and connected the dots. For a whole year she put together a senate bill, SB 19, about nutrition in schools. She kept it to younger grades, not high school, and created nutrition standards for competitive foods on campus, a la carte, vending machines, etc.
  - The school food service thought they were going to lose a lot of money if they couldn't sell junk food themselves. They managed to add a 10 cents

a meal clause. It became an unfunded mandate and schools ran out of funding so it went no where.

- Lead to study pilot test which took out mostly chips, candy, and soda from schools. Did this help or hurt the food service to not be able to sell unhealthy snacks and foods?
  - 81% of the schools increased their food service revenues (13 out of 16), due to improved reimbursable meal sales, subsidized by federal government
  - Schools also put in an extra effort to promote better school meals
  - Eight schools eliminated a la carte items completely
- Prior, schools were making the same on a la carte and meal sales. After the intervention, meal sales picked up dramatically and total revenues remained about the same.
- Non-food service venues: schools only lost \$1,274-\$6,900 per school
- There are a LOT of other things schools can sell besides food to make money
- Recommended that one time capital expenditures to upgrade food service kitchen and eating areas be made
- New legislation signed into law in 2005. Wouldn't have been possible without the science. Impact because it was the first state to implement a law to this effect. Also, every 1/8 students in the U.S. goes to school in California, so this dramatically affects how many children consume food companies' products.
- **Loel Solomon** led community intervention efforts and the **Strategic Alliance** was founded (2004) to shift the debate away from the individual to the role of environment and policy
- **The National Convergence** was created to share tools and funding
- **The California Convergence** was created
- The center helped pass the school bill, now conducting study to evaluate the impact of the SB12 and 965 bills. Also evaluating: Alice Water's school initiative, Fresh Start program to add more fruits to the school breakfast program, the Federal School Wellness Policies, HEAC and HEAL (initiatives to make California areas healthier), Life in Action (program in Canada)
- Evaluated Kaiser's menu labeling efforts in their cafeterias. Found that employees liked having the information even if they didn't use it. And for the 1/3 of people who used it, it made a difference in what side dish they ordered/
- Evaluating **Central Food Bank of New York's No Soda No Candy Policy**. Received a lot of criticism because people said their clients want those foods. Goes against everything because soda contributions are enormous. Writing up study now which was a survey of the client's preferences.

- Which foods did clients say they wanted? Fruits, vegetables, and meat
- Out of 20 foods, they didn't want soda and candy. Clients know these items are cheap and they can get them anywhere. This data will shape California's food bank policies.
- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation** evaluation: California Endowment said willing to support effort if it works. Didn't want to be evaluated externally but want funding.
- Reviewing literature about physical education in schools
- Just finished evaluating the impact of the BMI report cards mailed to parents in California
  - Thought effective strategy was to inform parents of their children's BMI
  - Found half the schools give it to parents and half don't (because not mandated)
- Governor working to get sports drinks out of all California schools in next round of legislation
- **The Child Care Team:** focus on food in childcare
- Are we making a difference? Looking at the prevalence of overweight between 2001 and 2008, we see that we are not yet reversing the obesity trends, but there is a slight shift to those curves. There is still a lot of work to be done! So celebrate successes but KEEP WORKING!