

# October 2021 Updates

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living



## October 2021

Greetings from the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living! The fall semester is in full swing at the UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin with many new faces joining us. We are excitedly continuing to work toward our vision of 'healthy children in a healthy world' with our new faculty, staff, and students.

Keep reading to see what we've been up to lately!

## COVID-19 Work

Catch up on our [COVID-19 work](#) including webinars, reports, and research recommendations.

## TX RPC Resources

Explore the newest health policy [resources](#) from our Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration.

## Healthy Children, Healthy State

Stay up to date with our [Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits](#) - recently updated with new TX SPAN data!



## Philip R. Nader Legacy of Health Lectureship

Join us for this virtual event on Thursday, October 7, 2021.

"Responsive Feeding and Childhood Obesity Prevention:  
An Equitable Nurturing Care Perspective"

Presented by:

**Dr. Rafael Perez-Escamilla**

Professor of Public Health

Director, Office of Public Health Practice

Director, Global Health Concentration

Director, Maternal Child Health Promotion Program, Center  
for Methods on Implementation and Prevention Science  
(CMIPS)

Yale School of Public Health

[REGISTER ONLINE](#)

## Newly Released Reports from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

### COVID-19 Myth vs. Fact

As of September 22, 2021, only 64.3% of people ages 12 years or older in the U.S. are fully vaccinated, and rates of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths remain high. Using

evidence-based information, this resource clarifies several misconceptions about the safety and effectiveness of masks and vaccines for protection from COVID-19.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

## Protecting Our Children From COVID-19: How Texans Can Help

Vaccination is the best way to protect our families and prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, wearing masks and social distancing are proven methods to slow the transmission of COVID-19.

[READ THE REPORT](#)



### New Investigators at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Dr. Augusto Cesar Ferreira de Moraes is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and Environmental Sciences at the UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin.

Dr. de Moraes joins us from the University of Sao Paulo where he was an Assistant Research Professor and the Scientific Coordinator for the Youth/Child Cardiovascular Risk and Environmental (YCARE) Research Group. Dr. de Moraes has gained research experience in epidemiology of cardiovascular health, diagnostic methods, environmental and socioeconomic determinants, and lifestyle behaviors.

---



Dr. Kevin Lanza is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and Environmental Sciences at the UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin.

Dr. Lanza received his PhD in City & Regional Planning from Georgia Institute of Technology and completed his postdoctoral training at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin.

In his research, Dr. Lanza explores the relations between the environment, health behaviors, and health through the lens of climate equity. His primary aims are to determine the impact of extreme heat on physical activity, exertional heat illness, and chronic diseases of individuals living in low-income communities and communities of color, and to develop interventions (behavioral, programmatic, and environmental) to improve community resilience. Ultimately, his research goal is to inform policies that eliminate race-, ethnicity-, and class-based health inequities in the face of warming from urbanization and climate change. Dr. Lanza acknowledges that authentic partnership with community members is essential for health and climate solutions to be truly effective.



## Michael & Susan Dell Post-Doctoral Fellow

Dr. Ethan Hunt is the new Michael & Susan Dell Post-Doctoral Fellow! Dr. Hunt completed his PhD in exercise science at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health in summer 2021.

Dr. Hunt's research interests include childhood obesity prevention, health disparities, and obesogenic behaviors. In his spare time, he enjoys road cycling, mountain biking, hanging out with his two German short hair pointers (Duke and Zoey) and his new wife, Whitney.



## Dell Health Scholar

Shelby Flores-Thorpe, MEd is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Science at the Austin Campus. A native New Mexican, Shelby received her Master of Education in Health Education from Texas State University and her bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from St. Edward's University before starting at UTHealth School of Public Health. Between her bachelor's and master's degrees, Shelby worked for a non-profit in New Mexico to implement nutrition and wellness classes into Native American communities across the state.

Her current research interests are translational research – how policy and public health can work in tandem – and food security in college students and adults. Shelby has worked on the FRESH Austin project and currently works with the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project.



## Dell Health Undergraduate Scholar

Kelsi Peterson is a senior at St. Edward's University pursuing a bachelor's in Social Work with a minor in Spanish. Throughout her college career, Kelsi's passion for service and advocacy has shown throughout the St. Edward's Community. On campus, she has held various roles within the Student Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Campus Ministry, promoting spiritual health and social justice. Outside of St. Ed's, Kelsi has lent her talents to numerous causes across the state, including Environment Texas, antiracist missions, and the Where Are You Homeless Outreach in Dallas, Texas.

After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Kelsi hopes to pursue an MSW and MPH. Long term, she hopes to work in global health and promote wellness in communities around the world.

**View Our Most Popular Resources:**

## [87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature Bill Tracker](#)

The legislative bill tracker showcased proposed bills related to child and adolescent health and updates throughout session as bills moved through the legislative process.

### Recent Webinars:

#### [Resuming In-Person Physical Activity Safely: Updated COVID-19 Guidance and Practical Recommendations](#)

As COVID-19 rates fall and vaccinations are being administered, many people are returning to in-person physical activity. However, the guidance on how to safely participate in physical activities varies by sport and by setting and is often updated based on the latest research evidence. This webinar reviewed the latest safety guidelines.

#### [COVID Quo Vadis? Variants, Sick Kids, Vaccines and the Unvaccinated](#)

This webinar shared current evidence of the origin of COVID-19 as well as how variants form, the impact of the Delta variant on the unvaccinated, vaccines and the Delta variant, the Delta variants impact on children, Lambda and beyond.

#### [Health Promotion Interweaving: Designing Health Promotion Interventions in Context Via Youth Voice and Community Partnerships](#)

This webinar explored the design method of health promotion interweaving into settings and environments, defined as weaving or blending health promotion strategies, practices, programs, and policies to fit within and build from existing context. The webinar shared the experience of the Youth-led Community Health Learning Initiative, a youth-led community health assessment initiative aimed at identifying both needs and actionable opportunities for health improvement in partnership with two central Texas communities. It also highlights the Stronger Austin initiative, a community partner-driven initiative in which free adult fitness classes were interwoven into settings with widespread access for community residents, including clinics, public schools, city-supported housing, recreation centers and neighborhood parks.

#### [Tobacco Exposure and Children's Health: Identifying Critical Windows and Joint Effects](#)

Tobacco exposure is detrimental to early-life growth and the developing brain. Few epidemiological studies have examined prenatal and postnatal exposures within the same study. Therefore, the most susceptible developmental periods are unknown. Early-life nutrition and other environmental factors may further alter risk, but the potential effect-modifying role of these factors has yet to be explored. This webinar presented current and ongoing evidence addressing these important gaps in knowledge.

### [View Our Recent Publications Online!](#)

### [See Our Texas Obesity Awareness Week Newsletter and Resources!](#)

---

Thanks for reading!

Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN, LD, CNS, FISBNPA, Director

Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH, Associate Director

Tiffni Menendez, MPH, Senior Program Manager

Kate Faris, Communication Specialist and Newsletter Editor

Amelia McClellan, Research Associate and Newsletter Editor

