



## Center Spotlight

### In memoriam: Harold W. (Bill) Kohl III, PhD



It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we say goodbye to **Dr. Bill Kohl**, our colleague, friend, and beloved faculty member.

An esteemed educator, mentor, and researcher, Dr. Kohl dedicated over four decades to advancing the scientific understanding of physical fitness and its impact on health and disease.

Dr. Kohl was a pivotal leader, driving policy and guideline changes for physical activity and public health both in the United States and globally. He authored nearly 300 articles with over 42,000 citations and an h-index of 74, highlighting his profound influence on the scientific community.

You can read more about Bill's life and family in the [Austin American Statesman Obituary](#) as well as share your own thoughts and memories. You can also make contributions to the scholarship set up in his name [here](#).

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# Dr. Springer inducted into Shine Academy

Congratulations Dr. Andrew Springer who was inducted as a member of the 2024 class of The University of Texas Kenneth I. Shine, MD, Academy of Health Science Education! This honor is given to select faculty members from UT System's six health institutions.



[Read more](#)

## Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project is a network of non-partisan health researchers in Texas to support policymakers' legislative priorities in preparation for the Texas Legislative Session. Take a look at some of our newest resources:

- [Congenital Syphilis](#)

Learn more about the TX RPC Project [here](#).

[View More Health Policy Resources](#)

### Congenital Syphilis

February 16, 2024

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Texas has consistently had some of the highest reported cases of both syphilis and congenital syphilis in the country.<sup>1,2</sup>
  - In 2022, approximately 25% of the nation's congenital syphilis cases came from Texas.<sup>1</sup>
2. Congenital syphilis can have major health impacts on a baby, but the extent depends on
  - When syphilis was acquired
  - Whether the mother received adequate treatment.<sup>3,4</sup>

#### Background

Congenital syphilis (CS) is a severe, disabling, and often life-threatening disease seen in infants whose mothers were infected with syphilis during pregnancy and were not fully treated.

<sup>1</sup> The rate of syphilis among the general U.S. population began increasing more than a decade ago, with exponential annual increases since 2018, contributing to the rapidly increasing incidence of syphilis among pregnant women.<sup>4,5</sup>



#### Implications

- Approximately 40% of babies born to women with untreated syphilis can be stillborn or die from the infection soon after birth.<sup>6</sup>
- Surviving infants may be affected by lifelong health issues including bone damage, severe anemia, enlarged liver and spleen, blindness, deafness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or seizures.<sup>4</sup>
- People infected with syphilis often do not have symptoms — known as latent syphilis — and thus may not be aware of their infection.<sup>7</sup>
- As a result, the lack of timely testing and adequate treatment during pregnancy are the main drivers of CS.<sup>8</sup>

TREATMENT FOR ACTIVE SYPHILIS IN PREGNANT WOMEN CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF STILLBIRTH BY BORNLY SONS, HIGHLIGHTING THE PREVENTIVE QUALITY OF THIS CARE.

**House Bill 12**  
goes into effect!

HB 12 extends Medicaid coverage for new mothers up to 12-months postpartum.

The new law went into effect March 1.

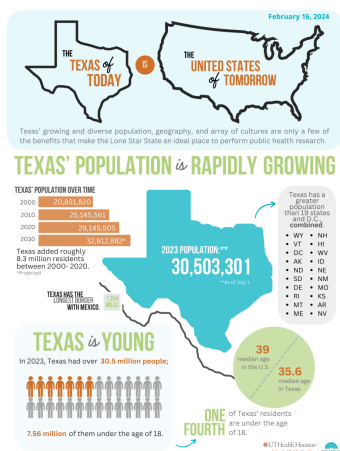
Enroll:  
[www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com)

Texas House Bill 12 is officially in effect!

The new law extends Medicaid coverage for new mothers to 12 months postpartum. Anyone whose pregnancy ended in the 12-month period prior to March 1 and who lost postpartum Medicaid coverage is eligible to re-enroll and maintain coverage for 12 full months after their pregnancy ended.

Individuals can enroll at [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com)

## New Resource



Texas' growing and diverse population, geography, and array of cultures are only a few of the benefits that makes the Lone Star State an ideal place to perform public health research.

Take a look at our updated "Texas of Today" document to see how the state has grown and changed in the past several years.

Find the document [here](#).

## Upcoming Webinars

MARCH

21

### How to Make Your Own Biodegradable Plant Pots and Sow Seeds Successfully

**Dolores Woods, MA, RD, LD**  
Nutritionist Supervisor, Nourish Program  
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

REGISTER →

MARCH

26

### Understanding Youth Movement Behaviors: Examples from the Texas SPAN Survey

**Chris Pfledderer, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences  
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

REGISTER →

[View Past Webinars](#)

## Faculty In The News



**Leah Whigham, PhD**, talked to [KTEP Radio](#) in El Paso about the El Paso Nutrition and Healthy Weight Clinic, how to have a healthier lifestyle, and clinical trials for weight loss medications.



**Kevin Lanza, PhD**, talked to [Scholastic News](#) about a study he led, which found that children and teens who volunteer tend to flourish mentally and physically.



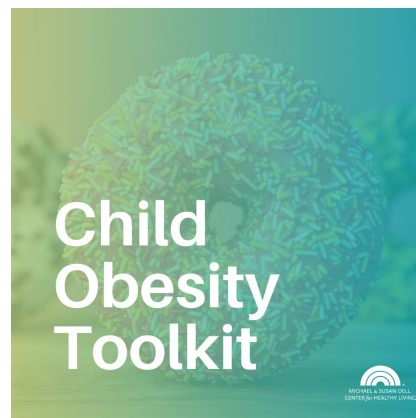
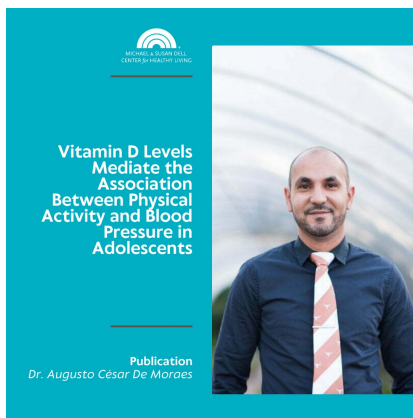
Research by **Christopher Pfledderer, PhD, MPH**, and **Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN**, on adolescent use of Nutrition Facts labels was covered in 20 outlets, including [ReachMD](#).



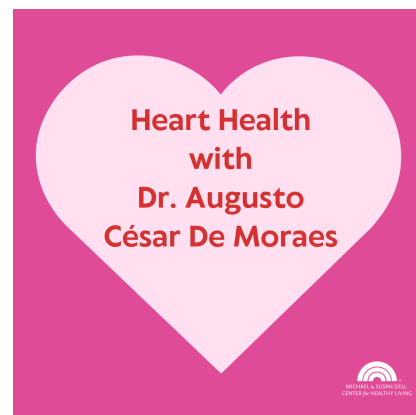
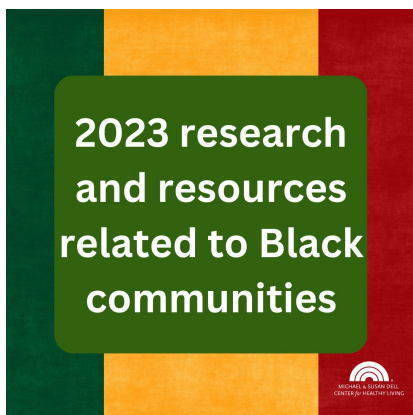
A study led by former School of Public Health student Michelle Kurkowski, DVM, and **Andrew Springer, DrPH**, found one-stop health clinics that treat both people and animals could help homeless people and their pets stay healthy. Twenty news outlets, including [HealthDay](#) and [MSN](#), covered the study.

**Dolores Woods, RDN**, appeared on KTRK-TV Channel 13 to share heart-healthy food alternatives to three classic Latin recipes. The segment aired during the [5 a.m.](#) and [6 a.m.](#) newscasts.

## Connect with us on social media!



[X \(Twitter\)](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Youtube](#)



[2023 research and resources related to Black communities](#)

[Heart Health with Dr. Augusto César Ferreira De Moraes](#)

[American Heart Month: Hearty Hot Sauce Competition](#)

# Austin Campus



UTHealth Houston Austin Campus Student Association members and faculty take community and public health to heart! Last week, they picked up trash in Mueller Park to help keep one of Austin's beautiful outdoor spaces clean.



The Austin Campus Student Association Board hosted a Spring 2024 welcome social for faculty, staff, and students. Attendees toured our soon-to-be new home at 1836 San Jacinto Blvd.

## AUSTIN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH GRADUATION CLASS OF 2024



 **UTHealth**  
Houston  
School of  
Public Health

Lady Bird Johnson Auditorium

2313 Red River St  
Austin, TX 78712

May 16, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

A momentous occasion to celebrate the achievement of Austin's School of Public Health graduates.

Reception to follow immediately after ceremony.

## Donate



Research and health promotion activities at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living are funded by gifts from individuals like you, foundations, or corporations, and by grants from government and state agencies.

Every donation, no matter the size, makes a difference in our vision of Healthy Children in a Healthy World.

[Make a Donation](#)

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