

Faculty Research Interests

Award-winning faculty at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living research a wide range of topics that explain and impact child health. Their collective curiosity is fueled by a desire to create a healthy future for communities through evidence-based information.

■ **Deanna Hoelscher**, PhD, RDN, LD, CNS, FIBNPA¹



- Behavior-based nutrition and physical activity education for children and families
- Obesity prevalence and prevention for Texas children and families
- Communication with legislators to inform health policy

■ **Dennis Andrulis**, PhD



- Health equity for racially and ethnically diverse populations
- Community resilience to consequences of climate change
- Collaboration with community groups to build accountable care communities

■ **Courtney Byrd-Williams**, PhD



- Health behaviors of young children, adolescents, and their families
- Youth health interventions that improve nutrition, physical activity, and oral health
- Breastfeeding support and outcomes as part of maternal and child health

■ **Ru-Jye (Lindi) Chuang**, DrPH, MS



- Nutrition and oral health interventions for individuals from low-income populations
- Impact of evidence-based programs on child health promotion
- Health disparities in nutrition and oral health among low-income children

■ **Melissa Blythe Harrell**, PhD



- Patterns of e-cigarette, cannabis, and other tobacco use among young people
- Youth risk factors for and health outcomes of tobacco and cannabis
- Behavioral interventions for young people in international settings (e.g., India)

■ **Natalia Heredia**, PhD, MPH



- Behavioral lifestyle interventions in Latine and other underserved communities
- Multi-level predictors of dietary and physical activity behaviors
- Management of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and other chronic diseases

■ **Steven Kelder**, PhD, MPH



- School-based child health programs that support healthy eating and physical activity
- Relationship between climate change and child health outcomes
- Behavioral epidemiology of oral health and tobacco/e-cigarette use in children

■ **Alexandra (Sandra) van den Berg**, PhD, MPH²



- Food systems that decrease food insecurity and increase nutrition security
- Sustainable food systems at the local and global levels
- Interactions between planetary health and public health

■ **Henry (Shelton) Brown, III**, PhD



- Cost-effectiveness of substance use disorder and nutrition interventions
- Health insurance markets and broader health economics
- Online cost-effectiveness calculators to aid recovery organizations

■ **Baojiang Chen**, PhD



- Statistical applications in public health and behavioral sciences
- Method development for longitudinal, missing, and survival data analysis
- Child health statistics regarding tobacco control, nutrition, and physical activity

■ **Augusto César F. De Moraes**, PhD, MS, BS



- Role of structural social inequities in heart health and brain development
- Impacts of malnutrition on cardiovascular health in pediatrics
- Relationship between environmental factors, lifestyle behaviors, and health outcomes

■ **Emily T. Hébert**, PhD



- Mobile technology as a vehicle for health behavior interventions
- Health behavior intervention access for socioeconomically disadvantaged populations
- Precision (personalized) interventions for substance use disorders

■ **Ethan Hunt**, PhD, MPH



- Childhood obesity prevention in underserved populations
- Disparities in health outcomes and life expectancies due to childhood trauma
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adversity prevention



Key

Faculty Location

- Austin
- Brownsville
- Dallas
- El Paso
- Houston

Executive Committee

1. Director
2. Associate Director
3. Member

■ **Kevin Lanza, PhD, MCRP³**



- Burden of extreme heat on low-income and racially/ethnically diverse populations
- Scalable policies that eliminate health inequities due to climate change
- Collaboration with community members to create practical health solutions

■ **Rupa Mahadevan, MD**



- Culinary medicine in medical and physician education, and clinical care
- Implementation of shared medical visits utilizing teaching kitchens
- Development of healthy eating habits in the newborn phase through adolescence

■ **Dorothy Mandell, PhD**



- Relationship between early experiences and later neurocognitive outcomes
- Parenting education about infant health and child safety
- Early childhood systems as the basis for optimizing development in Texas children

■ **Dale Mantey, PhD, MPA**



- Nicotine and cannabis use patterns among youth and young adults
- Intervention design and program evaluation for cancer prevention
- Secondary data analysis and quantitative statistics methods

■ **Michael Mrazek, PhD**



- Impact of attention training on distraction and mental health in schools
- AI-enabled EdTech to optimize student motivation and well-being
- Emerging risks of artificial general intelligence on youth mental health

■ **Divya Patel, PhD**



- Maternal/child health epidemiology for underserved populations
- Reproductive health, and access to pregnancy-related and contraception care
- Cancer prevention, with a focus on screening and human papillomavirus vaccine uptake

■ **Christopher Pfledderer, PhD, MPH**



- Barriers to and facilitators of meeting recommendations for the 24-hr activity cycle
- Optimizing the implementation and scale-up of childhood obesity interventions
- School-based physical activity interventions in rural communities

■ **Adriana Pérez, PhD**



- Application/development of biostatistical methods for missing and complex data
- Conduction of clinical and community trials, either individual or clustered
- Biostatistics in tobacco regulation and health research studies

■ **Nalini Ranjit, PhD³**



- Epidemiology of social disparities in health behaviors and outcomes
- Analysis of data from complex interventions targeting diet and physical activity
- Evaluation of policies that address mental health and food insecurity

■ **Belinda Reininger, DrPH**



- Roles and effectiveness of community health workers in health promotion
- Development of dietary and physical activity programs for Hispanic populations
- Analysis of implementation/effectiveness of community-wide health campaigns

■ **Shreela V. Sharma, PhD, RD, LD**



- Nutrition-related health disparities for individuals from low-income populations
- Behavioral epidemiology of diet-related chronic diseases in children
- Health behavior interventions for childhood obesity and oral health

■ **Andrew Springer, DrPH**



- Child and adolescent health promotion in the U.S. and Latin America
- Community health promotion planning and evaluation methods
- Socioecological influences on health behaviors in underserved communities

■ **Irene Tamí-Maury, DMD, DrPH, MS**



- Virtual interventions and education for healthcare providers and CHWs
- Tobacco use in underserved populations in the U.S. (e.g., LGBTQ+, HIV) and in low/middle income countries (e.g., Latin America)
- Oral health and/or dental care research

■ **Timothy Walker, PhD**



- Physical activity promotion in schools and community settings
- Implementation strategy development to improve use of interventions
- Measure development for health promotion and implementation research

■ **Leah Whigham, PhD, FTOS**



- Collective Impact Model as a tool for addressing obesity at a regional level
- Obesity treatment in primary care, food systems, and built environment
- School health and workplace wellness in relation to obesity

■ **Anna Wilkinson, PhD³**



- Impulsivity and nicotine use as indicators of suicidal behaviors
- Impact of social media/acclulturation on vape use by Mexican-American undergrads
- Relationship between e-cigarette use by college students and mental health