

Healthy Food Retail Work Group

About the Healthy Food Retail Work Group

The Healthy Food Retail (HFR) Work Group is a team of researchers and leaders working on healthy food retail related issues and who are committed to improving the health of children and their families through improved research, evaluation, and dissemination of healthy food retail strategies. The work group is a collaborative effort of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Healthy Eating Research (HER) program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN).

Membership in the work group is open to all with an interest in obesity and nutrition in the food retail setting, including research focused on shifting consumer purchases toward healthier foods and beverages that align with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and to increase demand for these options. The primary population of interest is children, ages 0 to 18, and their families, especially in lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk for obesity. Settings of focus include a variety of retail outlets, e.g., supercenters/big box stores, supermarkets, grocery stores, corner stores, bodegas/tiendas, convenience stores, farmers' markets, dollar stores, drug stores, restaurants, cafeterias, food carts/trucks, vending machines and online food shopping. The work group is also interested in the role of retail food sources in relationship to other aspects and levels of the food system (e.g., wholesalers, manufacturers, charitable/food recovery organizations).

Work Group Mission

The mission of the HFR Work Group is to build a network of researchers and leaders from academia, non-profit organizations, government, and other funding agencies focused on increasing the quantity and quality of research in the area of childhood obesity and nutrition in the food retail setting to:

- Influence purchases by children and their families toward healthier foods and beverages that align with the DGA by increasing demand for these options;
- Improve access to healthier foods and beverages by working directly with retailers; and
- Facilitate the development and implementation of evidence-informed policies.

Special emphasis is placed on equity and addressing the needs of communities and people at highest risk for obesity, especially lower-income and racial/ethnic populations.

Work Group Goals

Overall Goal: To identify and promote the most effective strategies to shift consumers away from purchasing and consuming unhealthy, energy-dense foods and beverages, and instead toward purchasing and consuming healthier foods and beverages that align with the DGA. We aim to achieve this by involving early to senior career researchers and practitioners in designing, conducting, and disseminating research and catalyzing action in and across various food retail settings on how to increase access to and demand for healthier options.

Longer-Term Goals:

1. Develop forward looking HFR research and research-to-practice agenda to facilitate desirable changes in the food retail environment to improve the availability, accessibility, appeal, affordability, image of, and demand for healthy products

2. Generate awareness of and interest in HFR research by documenting and making the case for its relevance to overall obesity and related chronic disease prevention and control efforts in the US and internationally
3. Build and disseminate evidence to support changes to HFR policies, environments, and practices
4. Increase funding with no/low risk of conflicts of interest for innovative HFR research and research-to-practice
5. Increase the number and capabilities of HFR researchers, especially early-career researchers
6. Increase the amount and quality of HFR research and research-to-practice
7. Affect change in national, state, local, and tribal policies to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages purchased by children and their families
8. Encourage the development of and increase access to methods and measurement tools and surveillance data/systems through (e.g., web-based platforms, NCCOR's Catalogue of Surveillance Systems - <http://tools.nccor.org/css>)

Meeting Frequency and Format:

Full work group meetings will consist of a joint speaker series held every 2 months. The topics for the speaker series will be decided by the leadership team and potential presenters will be contacted by the speakers committee. All work group members are encouraged to join these meetings.

After each speaker, there will be a group discussion to determine if further steps need to be taken on the speaker topic. The leadership team will have bi-monthly meetings to discuss future speakers, topics, and potential projects of interest. Opportunities for projects or products to pursue, including papers for publication, grants to write, and/or research to conduct may arise periodically and may be led by members of the leadership team or the broader work group based on interest and availability.

If you are interested in learning more about current projects led by work group members, please contact the work group fellow.

HFR Work Group Leadership Team

1. Co-chairs
 - a. Megan R. Winkler (megan.winkler@emory.edu), PhD, RN, Assistant Professor, Department of Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
 - b. Shu Wen Ng (shuwen@unc.edu), PhD, Professor, Department of Nutrition, Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
2. Speakers Committee
 - a. Betsy Anderson Steeves (easteeves@centerfornutrition.org), PhD, RD, Senior Research Scientist, Center for Nutrition & Health Impact
 - b. Melissa Fuster (mfuster@tulane.edu), PhD, Associate Professor, Social, Behavioral, & Population Sciences, Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
3. Retailer Representative
 - c. Kevin Boyanowski (kb1263@aol.com)

For more information, please contact:

Alexandra Ross, MHS
Healthy Food Retail Work Group Fellow
aaross@email.unc.edu

Senthil Ananthan, MPH, MBA
Research Analyst, Healthy Eating Research
senthil.ananthan@duke.edu

Jennifer Tong, MPH
Project Manager, NOPREN Coordinating Center
Jennifer.Tong@ucsf.edu