

Nemours Children's Experts Discuss Ways to Achieve Equity in Childhood Obesity Care

Authors address how social factors create disparities in childhood obesity

WILMINGTON, Del. (Jan. 18, 2024) — Nemours Children's Health clinician-scientist Thao-Ly Phan, MD, MPH, has led a group of leading pediatricians and researchers to identify ways to address disparities in childhood obesity connected to long-standing social inequities.

In the latest issue of [Current Opinion in Pediatrics](#), Phan, a Senior Research Scientist with the Center for Healthcare Delivery Science and Medical Director of the Healthy Weight and Wellness Clinic, both located at Nemours Children's Hospital, Delaware, says the United States is currently at a "[turning point](#)" in addressing obesity, which affects 1 in 5 children in the U.S. Children from communities of color and communities with lower levels of opportunity are more likely to experience obesity than other children.

Phan says that it is critical that we provide care that is tailored to the needs and values of diverse populations. "The solutions that we have relied on to prevent and treat obesity don't always work—especially for diverse communities," according to Phan. "If we want to come up with solutions that work we need to tackle the underlying social factors that lead to unequal health outcomes."

As editor of the special edition of *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, Phan asked women leaders from diverse backgrounds and with deep experience working with diverse communities to provide reviews on topics that they felt would move the field forward. Among the group of authors are Nemours clinician-scientists Carissa M. Baker-Smith, MD, MPH, and Chijioke Ikomi, MD, who published an [article](#) that reviews the relationship between the level of deprivation of resources in a neighborhood and pediatric obesity.

Baker-Smith, Director of the Nemours Preventive Cardiology Program, and Ikomi, an Endocrinologist within the Department of Pediatrics, discuss the intersectionality between neighborhood deprivation, race, ethnicity, and obesity. They note that neighborhood deprivation contributes to independent risk for obesity and cardiometabolic disease through a complex interplay between environmental and psychological factors. The authors also suggest solutions to disparities in pediatric obesity, from community-based interventions to policy changes that can improve the built environment.

The collection of articles provides a wide-ranging set of perspectives on how to reduce inequities in obesity. The authors focus on addressing underlying social needs, tailoring interventions to be culturally sensitive, partnering with community stakeholders to increase access to care, guarding against weight and racial discrimination, and practicing a trauma-informed approach to care.

These articles support the Nemours Children's vision of creating the healthiest generations of children by caring for the whole child. Nemours provides [comprehensive resources](#) on nutrition and healthy weight, as noted at the August 2023 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Nemours' Well Beyond Medicine podcast addressed this topic in a December 2023 [episode](#).

"Nemours' bold strategy to redefine children's health includes a relentless focus on the social determinants of health, with the goal of eliminating health disparities and helping communities thrive," said Kara Odom Walker, MD, Executive Vice President, Chief Population Health Officer, Nemours Children's Health.

About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, [Nemours KidsHealth.org](#).

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit [Nemours.org](#).

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