

## Background

In response to the epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States, the Arkansas legislature enacted a statewide initiative to measure schoolchildren's height and weight and inform parents about the body mass index (BMI) of the children. Researchers at the University of Arkansas, led by Arkansas Surgeon General Joseph Thompson, MD, MPH, now have comprehensive, longitudinal data over several years, which will permit unprecedented measures of the dynamics of obesity during childhood and adolescence, and its health and economic consequences.

Researchers at the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit are collaborating with Dr. Thompson and his colleagues, to expand the capacity of the research group to understand patterns of the multi-year data and extrapolate findings in Arkansas to the national level. This work builds on the prior research efforts of the Michigan team. This project is supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Methods

Collaborators at the University of Arkansas and the University of Michigan are working together to analyze and interpret data from Arkansas schoolchildren and linked Medicaid health care utilization and expenditure information, and to conduct similar analyses at the national level. National analyses are being performed using public-use data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

## Implications for Health Policy

Findings from this project will inform the ongoing national dialogue about the epidemic of childhood obesity among children and adolescents, and what policy approaches may ultimately hold the most promise as successful interventions.

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