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Diabetes Prevention Study Targets Southwest Chicago

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Researchers at the Illinois Prevention Research Center are enrolling participants in a lifestyle modification study to determine if losing weight through healthy eating and physical activity can lower their risk of diabetes.

"Our study takes the intensive lifestyle intervention of the Diabetes Prevention Program from the clinic to the community," said Laurie Ruggiero, principal investigator of the study and professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health.

The Diabetes Prevention Program was a national study that found Americans at high risk for type 2 diabetes can prevent or delay the disease by losing weight with a healthy diet and exercise.

"We are working to translate this successful program in a community setting delivered in groups by community residents," Dr. Ruggiero said.

The research project -- Making the Connection Healthy Living Program -- will enroll 200 Latinos and African Americans between the ages of 18 and 65 who live in the Chicago Lawn, Gage Park or West Lawn communities of southwest Chicago. Participants must have a body mass index between 25-40.

"Diabetes prevention is an important health priority for Chicago's ethnically diverse communities, especially in groups that are at increased risk of diabetes, such as African Americans and Latinos," said Ruggiero.

Based on statistics from the National Diabetes Education Program, about 2.5 million Latino Americans and 3.2 million African Americans over the age of 20 have diabetes.

The Healthy Living Program consists of 22 group sessions held in community locations over 12 months. Healthy Life coaches will teach participants about making food choices, limiting portion sizes, and engaging in regular physical activity to lose weight. Participants will be asked to keep track of their dietary intake, weight and physical activity -- including wearing a pedometer. The study also provides group support and links to community resources to support weight loss efforts.

"If the community-based program successfully promotes weight loss through improved eating and physical activity habits in people at increased risk of diabetes, then the long term goal is to sustain the program in these southwest Chicago communities and to disseminate the program to other areas in Chicago, and perhaps more broadly," said Ruggiero.

The Illinois Prevention Research Center of UIC is funded by a \$4 million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information about enrolling in the study, call (312) 355-1458.

Under the leadership of director Susan J. Curry, PhD, the Illinois Prevention Research Center works closely with its community partners, Chicago's academic community, and local, state and national public health leaders to improve the health of all Illinoisans.

For more information about the Illinois Prevention Research Center, visit <http://www.uic.edu/depts/over/hrpc/iprc/index.htm>.

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