



Director's Corner

Kathryn Porter, M.D., M.S.



Caption: Dr. Porter

With spring comes renewed enthusiasm about the important work we do to produce findings from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Our recently published *JAMA* article on obesity presented the latest data from the survey and showed an increasing trend in obesity and severe obesity among adults from 2007-08 to 2015-16. Our NCHS Data Brief on herpes simplex virus infection showed the latest prevalence estimates for both types 1 and 2, and a declining trend among adults from 1999-2000 to 2015-16. Whether the topic is chronic disease, infectious disease, nutrition, or exposure to environmental chemicals, data from NHANES are the definitive source of objective and reliable information for the nation. So popular is the survey that when I entered the term "NHANES" into the search field of a commonly used internet search engine, almost 2 million results were returned.

Exciting new content is being planned for NHANES 2019-20. On the exam side, we are working with the National Institutes on Deafness and other Communication Disorder (NIDCD) on an updated protocol for measuring balance in adults 40 years and older. The new balance protocol, which consists of a modified Romberg test and vision assessments including a dynamic visual acuity test and contrast sensitivity test, has just completed its pilot in the field. NIDCD is also working with us on a Words-in-Noise assessment, which will add information on functional hearing loss to the current audiometry component, which produces data on hearing impairment based on pure-tone audiometry.

Our Division is preparing for additional new topics and content is being added to questionnaire, exam, and laboratory components. We thank all of our collaborators who have participated in the planning process.

Concurrent to planning for NHANES 2019-20, we have started strategic planning for NHANES 2023. Declining response rates and increasing costs of recruiting hard-to-survey populations are driving our need to explore new ways to conduct the survey while still preserving our ability to make estimates that only NHANES can deliver. Last summer, we put out a solicitation on *FedBizOpps.gov* requesting information on new approaches to future NHANES and received multiple responses. We invited vendors to NCHS who shared their experience, depth of talent, and solutions, some of which could be further developed as we move forward. Planning for NHANES 2023 and beyond will only succeed with involvement from our stakeholders. We plan to hold NHANES consortium webinars to keep our past, current and future collaborators involved in the process. We invite all NHANES users to start thinking about health data needed in 2025 and beyond – we want the next generation NHANES to continue being the leader in objectively measured health data for the nation.



NHANES Longitudinal Study

The NHANES Longitudinal Study (LS) – Feasibility Component wrapped up in-person field operations in early February. Health representatives succeeded in finding, interviewing and examining over two thirds of the previously examined surviving NHANES participants who were originally examined between 2007-2014. The project team is now conducting proxy interviews among those identified as deceased, and working on obtaining hospital records from a subset of all consenting participants. The study is being done in collaboration with CDC’s Division of Diabetes

Translation whose group desires nationally representative data to quantify the relative risk of developing diabetes as well complications among those with the disease. When the NHANES-LS Feasibility Component concludes data collection, the Division will evaluate each phase of the operations to determine if a main follow-up study should be proposed, and collaborators sought.

For more information on the longitudinal study, visit our website at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes-ls/>.

STI Training with Johns Hopkins

On November 28, 2017, the NHANES Health Education team attended an in-house training with the STD/HIV Prevention Training Center at Johns Hopkins.

The NHANES Health Education team is a highly trained, multilingual staff of nine volunteers who serve on the front lines of engaging with the general public and NHANES participants. On a daily basis, staff answer calls on two different phone lines: a general inquiry line for questions/concerns and a HIV/STD result line. The team is 100% voluntary, and all staff continue to conduct their normal daily duties in addition to answering the phone lines.

Training included the most current information on collection and reporting mechanisms for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including those tested in NHANES: chlamydia, genital herpes, HIV, HPV, and trichomonas. Trainings, such as this one, are

important to keep the team privy to all new information but also to train new volunteers, and for this training two new members were included to round out the team with 11 people.

Because the NHANES Health Education team provides STI results over the phone to NHANES participants, the team must also be trained to respond to all questions participants may have and be able to provide referrals for participants to seek further treatment and/or retesting.



NHANES Guests

Since the fall we've had the privilege of two people joining NHANES, one was a guest researcher and one was a Presidential Fellow rotation.

Anna Yakovleva was part of NHANES for three months for 40% of her time. Her main task was to write a SAS program that converts PLINK datasets (genetic dataset from Genome Wide Association Studies) to SAS datasets. She exceeded expectations, while working with Jody McLean and Dr. Lukacs, by additionally providing information on commercially available software packages used for this task. She also reviewed oral microbiome data documentation and provided feedback.

Dr. Dongmei Yu came to us a guest researcher from China Health and Nutrition Survey (CHNS). She spent time working with each branch of DHANES including the Office of the Director, learning different aspects of how we conduct the survey. She also held a presentation about CHNS and the operational tactics used for their survey.

NHANES Publications

DHANES staff have authored/co-authored several publications since our last newsletter. The most recent NCHS publications are:

- Trends in Obesity and Severe Obesity Prevalence in US Youth and Adults by Sex and Age, 2007-2008 to 2015-2016. Hales CM, Fryar CD, Carroll MD, Freedman DS, Ogden CL. JAMA. 2018 Mar 23. doi: 10.1001/jama.2018.3060.
- Herrick KA, Rossen LM, Parsons R, Dodd KW. Estimating usual dietary intake from National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data using the National Cancer Institute method. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 2(178). 2018.

DHANES Workshop

DHANES organized and held a workshop: *Using the CDC growth charts for assessing extreme values of BMI as a continuous variable* on February 21-22 at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Twenty-eight experts (pediatricians, epidemiologists and statisticians) from CDC Atlanta, NCHS, NIH, and academic institutions participated. Dr. Cynthia Ogden led off the workshop, framing the issue and setting the parameters for the discussions that followed. Speakers included Tim Cole who developed the LMS method that is widely used to create growth charts. Dr. Craig Hales presented draft criteria for evaluating methods for assessing extreme BMI values and led a discussion among participants to prioritize criteria. Although no single approach was deemed best, the number of potential solutions was narrowed and participants agreed that further analyses are needed to compare potential methods. A report from the workshop is planned.

- Brody DJ, Pratt LA, Hughes J. Prevalence of depression among adults aged 20 and over: United States, 2013–2016. NCHS Data Brief, no 303. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2018.
- McQuillan G, Kruszon-Moran D, Flagg EW, Paulose-Ram R. Prevalence of herpes simplex virus type 1 and type 2 in persons aged 14–49: United States, 2015–2016. NCHS Data Brief, no 304. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2018.

For a full list of our publications, visit the NCHS website:

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/new_nhanes.htm.