The Delta Obesity Prevention Research Unit—Mission Statement

The Delta Obesity Prevention Research Unit is coordinating a major research program that brings together the expertise of seven institutions in the three state region. These institutions and their research scientists provide unique skills and resources to the Delta. Their research will result in Lower Mississippi Delta specific recommendations for input into the 2015 Dietary Guidelines that will enable rural Lower Mississippi Delta individuals and families to adopt food and physical activity guidelines for sustaining healthy weights, preventing obesity, and reducing the risk factors for obesity related chronic diseases.

Current Mississippi Cooperator Personnel Supported by Delta OPRU

The University of Southern Mississippi
- Carol Connell
- Kathy Yadrick
- Holly Federico Huye
- Jamie Zoellner
- LaShaundrea Crook
- Martha Resavy
- Belynda Brock
- Briauna Perryman
- Alicia Landry
- 13 Part Time Employees

Alcorn State University
- Cinda Catchings
- Edith Ezekwe
- Gwendolyn Lucas
- Mattie Rasco
- 8 Part Time Employees

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Effectiveness of Women’s Social Club Members Adopting Modified Dietary Guidelines

Obesity rates in the Lower Mississippi Delta region are among the highest in the U.S., with less than 7% of Delta adults consuming a healthy diet that can reduce the risk of obesity. Evaluating the existing food patterns of Delta adults is needed. Adapting these existing patterns to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans will be achieved through the research conducted by the University of Southern Mississippi cooperating scientists. Minor, however effective, modifications will be made to existing dietary patterns and evaluated for successful implementation in Mississippi social women’s organizations over a 12 month period. Successful results will improve the diets of dietary residents, specifically weight status and healthy blood pressure. For additional information, contact Dr. Carol Connell (carol.connell@usm.edu).

Alcorn State University Significant Publications:


Adaptation and Adoption of the Dietary Guidelines by Caregivers of Head Start Children in Southwest Mississippi

The prevalence of childhood obesity is of great proportions amongst rural, limited resource populations in the Lower Mississippi Delta region and particularly in Mississippi. Cooperating researchers at Alcorn State University are conducting research to reduce the current levels of obesity in these populations. Researchers will utilize a pre-/post-test design to determine the effectiveness of combining nutrition education with social support to help caregivers make dietary changes. These changes will be monitored by looking for an increased consumption level of fruits and vegetables in caregivers of children attending Head Start Centers in Southwest Mississippi. Contact Dr. Mattie Rasco (mrasco@alcorn.edu) for additional information.