

**Latin American Diet Summit
April 21-23, 2005 in Mexico City**

Report of the Scientific Committee

Preamble: The Latin American Diet Summit:

1. Documented the specific health problems of urbanized Latinos, and examined a variety of existing solutions that have found success in addressing these problems,
2. Confirmed the validity of the international consensus on the eating, drinking, physical activity, and lifestyle patterns that promote lifelong good health, and
3. Declared the urgent need for new programs that motivate urbanized Latino individuals and families to embrace these patterns, which bring lifelong benefits.

And therefore:

A. Agreed that solutions to help urbanized Latino individuals and families achieve better health will be most successful if they provide measurable feedback and progress, in this context:

1. Body Mass Index remains a useful assessment tool and a motivational opportunity. Waist size is increasingly found to be another useful assessment tool.
2. Weighing oneself regularly should be made a part of health promotion programs.
3. Calorie balance should be included, and new emphasis should be placed on encouraging understanding of calorie balance issues. "Calories count, so track calories." "Energy balance" should also be introduced as a helpful concept.
4. "Metabolic fitness" is emerging as an important and potentially powerful instrument in health promotion.
5. Portion control should be linked with all other elements of the education program.
6. Healthy metrics for healthy Hispanic families and individuals should be determined and included in education programs.

B. Agreed that aggressive new programs for health promotion in urbanized Latino populations will be more effective if they include these elements:

1. Addressing the family unit as a whole, while acknowledging the central role of women.
2. Promoting the pleasures of food and beverages.
3. Speaking in the language of Latino foods ("people don't eat nutrition, they eat food").
4. Emphasizing positives including wise eating, wise meals, and initiatives such as the Oldways EatWise program.
5. An increase in the number of trained Hispanic nutrition and dietetic professionals.

C. Agreed that organizational and institutional partnerships must be formed with at least the following minimum objectives:

1. Develop positive ways to involve industry.
2. Enlist chefs to help make healthy choices attractive.
3. Involve community-based and social groups such as church, religious and community leaders.

D. Agreed that school systems (public and private) must be made full partners with these minimum goals:

1. Lunch and other feeding programs must fully reflect Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or other national guidelines and goals, as appropriate.
2. Curriculums must be modified to include significant elements on the elements of a healthy life, which includes nutrition, physical activity, cooking, and lifestyle.
3. Physical education programs should be re-established or maintained in all schools.

E. Agreed that continuing research must be carried out on:

1. Programs that effectively motivate people to participate in these programs and to remain with them.
2. Ways to convince individuals that these programs apply to them individually, because they will benefit them.
3. Programs that reach young children so that healthy lifestyle habits are developed at an early age.
4. Language that reflects Hispanic and Latino heritage, self-images, and "style."

Members of the Latin American Summit
Scientific Committee:

Chairs: Hector Borges, MD, PhD, Director, National Center for Nutrition in Mexico City; Hannia Campos, PhD, Associate Professor, Harvard School of Public Health; K. Dun Gifford, President, Oldways Preservation Trust; and John Foreyt, Professor, Baylor College of Medicine.

Members: Adolfo Chavez, Head of Applied Nutrition Department, Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos; Miriam Chavez, Research Fellow in Nutrition, Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos; Joanne Slavin, Professor, University of Minnesota; Luis Vargas, Investigador, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropologicas, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico; Michelle Wein, Assistant Professor, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.