

## **Activities of the Community Outreach and Translation Core: Evaluation of the Impact of Recruitment and Retention Activities**

Luz Claudio, PhD and Reeve Chace, MPH

Mount Sinai School of Medicine

**Background:** The Community Outreach and Translation Core (COTC) was created at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine to enhance the retention of participants enrolled in a 7-year longitudinal study of environmental impacts on growth and development among children in an economically disadvantaged, minority community (East Harlem, New York City). COTC methods to enhance participant retention and provide a service to the community include publication of targeted health materials and giveaways, such as school supplies. In addition, community-based collaborators hold educational workshops on topics related to science, health, and fitness that are provided to study participants and their families.

**Objective:** To evaluate the effectiveness of COTC educational activities and giveaways to improve recruitment and support retention of participants in the environmental exposures study.

**Methods:** Over the course of one study year, participants were invited to attend 12 different workshops and activities held in or around East Harlem. All were invited via mail to the COTC event. Meticulous records of invitations sent and attendance rates to events were maintained. Records were then analyzed to characterize the demographics of those who attend events.

**Results:** About half the enrolled participants attended any COTC activity. The sample of people who attended COTC activities is ethnically representative of the overall enrolled population: 70% Hispanic and 30% African-American.. The racial breakdown of attendees (N=139) was similar to the overall enrolled population: 72% Hispanic and 28% African-American, suggesting that activities did not attract one particular group over the other. However, attendance was closely dependent on place of recruitment, and whether participants lived within walking distance from the events. Those recruited via health fairs or community based organizations (CBOs) attended events more frequently. Events where gifts of necessities, like school supplies, were offered were more highly attended than purely educational activities.

**Conclusion:** Our results indicate that parents of minority, low-income pediatric study participants are more likely to be repeat attendees in educational activities when they have been recruited from a CBO or health fair, and live within walking distance of the activity. This indicates that those more likely to take advantage of study-sponsored educational events may be those participants already involved in health-promoting activities and in their communities. Other COTC events, such as those in which necessities, such as school supplies, are offered, attract a greater percentage of participants recruited at a school or clinic.