

## HIGHLIGHTS

### *Wei Perng, PhD, MPH*

I hail from Ann Arbor, Michigan, the vibrant backyard of the University of Michigan where I received my BS in Neuropsychology (2008), followed by my MPH (2010) and PhD (2012) in Epidemiology. My interest in pediatrics stems from a broader intrigue in developmental origins of health and disease (DOHaD). I thank my PhD advisor, Dr. Eduardo Villamor, for piquing my curiosity about this topic via my dissertation on early-life determinants of weight gain in Colombian



schoolchildren. During my postdoc, I worked on a variety of DOHaD projects using data from project viva, an ongoing Boston-area pre-birth cohort. At the time, my postdoc mentor Dr. Emily Oken had just received results from metabolomic profiling in fasting blood of 8–13-year-old participants. She bravely loosed me on these exciting data. Inspired by evidence in adults that elevated serum branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) precede type 2 diabetes by over a decade, I explored relations of > 300 serum metabolites with conventional metabolic biomarkers in project viva. I found that by the age of 8 years, BCAAs were already associated with insulin resistance, inflammation, and dysregulated satiety hormones. The motivation to replicate these findings in another pediatric population led to subsequent endeavors, including my current CCTSI-funded research to identify and externally-validate metabolomic biomarkers of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in two adolescent cohorts (EPOCH [PI: Dabelea] and HEROES [PI: Goran]). Within my broader research agenda concerning DOHaD of obesity in youth, I view metabolomics as a tool to identify biomarkers and understand mechanisms linking modifiable behaviors (i.e., diet) to cardio-metabolic risk in youth. Outside of work, I have two boys (4.5 y and almost 2 y), a 100 lb Chesapeake Bay retriever (13 y), and a wanderlust husband. This combination means that I spend a lot of time outdoors – exploring, hiking, camping, and fly fishing (OK – maybe I'm just watching or wrangling the kids while my husband does that). Although I'll always be a Midwesterner at heart, Colorado could not be a more perfect location for these activities!

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

***A Successful NORC Virtual Retreat!*** Thanks goes to Vanessa Sherk, Sean Iwamoto, Kristy Truesdale and Ed Melanson for organizing a fantastic retreat for our membership. The retreat included keynote talks from Drs. Darlene Sandoval and Kartik Shankar, as well as short talks from the NORC Pilot Awardees. We look forward to next year, when we hope to be able to meet in person.

***Colorado 2021 NORC Awards—Nominate Now!*** Nominations are open for this year's Colorado NORC Awards. Participating is easy, via a simple SurveyMonkey submission, and nominations are accepted from any faculty, trainee, or staff member who is affiliated with the Colorado NORC in some way. This is your chance to acknowledge the fantastic people we have in the NORC research base. Please see that attachment included with this newsletter email for more details and links to the nomination websites. **Deadline is 10/31/201.**

### ***Clinical Intervention and Translational (CIT) Core—Leadership Changes***

With the departure of Dr. Marc Cornier, we have a new leadership team for the NORC's CIT Core. Dr. Janine Higgins will be the new Director of the core, and Dr. Vicki Catenacci will serve as Associate Director. Dr. Higgins brings a wealth of experience in core management from her ongoing work as the Director of Operations for the Colorado Clinical Translation Science Institute (CCTSI), as well as her expertise in nutrition research as Director of the CCTSI Nutrition Core. Dr. Catenacci brings extensive experience in carrying our clinical diet and exercise interventions at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center. Together, this formidable team will spearhead a new era of collaboration between the NORC and CCTSI in supporting nutrition and obesity research in the Rocky Mountain region. For more information about the services provided by this core, please visit <http://cunorc.org/cores/clinical-core/>



### ***Colorado Obesity Medicine Fellowship Training Program***

The fellowship program is now entering its 3rd year, and is accepting applications. The fellow will participate in both didactic and direct patient contact experiences that will expand their knowledge and skills in this specific area. Experiences will take place at the Anschutz Health & Wellness Center, Children's Hospital, University of Colorado Hospital (UC Health), Colorado Kaiser Permanente and the Denver Veteran's Administration Medical Center. Applications for this fellowship program are now being accepted. More information about the program can be found here:

<http://cunorc.org/obesity-medicine-fellowship/>

### ***Sustaining Behavior Change Conference***

The University of Colorado Anschutz Health and Wellness Center (AHWC) in collaboration with the University of Alabama NORC and the University of Colorado NORC are sponsoring a 2-day multidisciplinary symposium addressing the critical issue of how to help people sustain behavior change on October 15th and 22nd. The symposium will be virtual and free but requires registration. To register, view schedule and speakers, please visit: <https://anschutzwellness.com/sbc/>

***Obesity Week 2021:*** Monday, November 1st—Friday, November 5th <https://obesityweek.org/>