

(NCS).

Relying on a public-private partnership of government, private industry, and community organizations, the NCS is a national response to the need for new knowledge in the area of children's health.<sup>3</sup>

The potential impact of such a study is sweeping with major treatment and practice implications, access to comprehensive data for further research, and opportunities for significant influence on public policy-making. The prospective economic savings are likewise substantial. In a much less quantifiable way, the NCS will enable a greater number of children to realize their individual potential by helping them to

### **The National Children's Study: Scope & Goals**

The Children's Health Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-310) in Section 1004 authorized the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) with a consortium of representatives from other federal agencies (such as the CDC and EPA) to establish the National Children's Study. It will follow the environmental (using pre- and post-natal natural and man-made environmental, biological, genetic, and psychosocial factors) influences on the health and development of approximately 100,000 children from 105 locations across the United States from birth to age 21. As the largest longitudinal study of U.S. children, their families and their environments, the National Children's Study will be a collaborative effort involving children of diverse ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The goal of the study is ultimately to improve the health and well-being of children. The study's key scientific questions address some of the most pressing health and development concerns for today's children, including: diabetes, injuries, asthma, obesity, autism, and learning and behavioral problems. Focusing on pregnancy related outcomes, injury, asthma, obesity, diabetes, physical development, child development, and mental health as priority health outcome themes, the NCS will be large enough to identify the causes of important but less common diseases and conditions<sup>7</sup> and help us to better understand the long-term health effects of these issues.<sup>8</sup> The NCS will be the first nationwide children's study to benefit from human genome

mapping and will explore the intersection of genetic and environmental factors in order to examine the affect of gene mutation and variation on the development of disease.<sup>9</sup> Utilizing both advanced technology to capture data and to track developments as well as critical community based partnerships, this study will provide a national resource for many future studies.

After many years of planning, the pilot phase of the NCS began in January 2009 and currently seven (7) Vanguard sites have begun testing the protocol for the main study. The pilot study will help to ensure a scientifically sound and economically feasible study that will provide the basis for addressing its many hypotheses.

### **The NCS in Northeast Ohio**

Study Centers are the administrative centers that run the NCS, commonly in more than one study location. The Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) Study Center, with Dorr Dearborn, PhD, MD as the Study Center PI and Lorain County location PI and Michele Walsh, MD, MS as Cuyahoga County PI, administers the Cuyahoga County and Lorain County sites. The project is being carried out by working with the center partners in each county and Battelle from Columbus, Ohio who will be responsible for data collection at both study locations. The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) is providing support on county characterization of both counties. Battelle will hire local workers, reflecting the make-up of the com

Community partners are a vital component of the NCS implementation providing valuable staff and expertise. These partners include University Hospitals and University Hospitals Case Medical Center, MetroHealth System, the Cleveland Clinic Hospital System, Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Cuyahoga County Invest in Children, EMH Regional Medical Center, Lorain County General Health District, Elyria City Health District, and the Public Services Institute of Lorain County Community College, making this study truly a community project.

Part of the responsibility of the CWRU Study Center is to facilitate the process of adding local adjunct studies to the National Children's Study. These studies would add measures/assessments to obtain additional

important information to the study, either for the local populations or on a grander, more multi-site scale. These studies cannot however add a significant burden to the study participants and must be independently funded after being vetted on both a local and national level. The process for adding adjunct studies is not yet finalized, but will be soon, so it is important for researchers to familiarize themselves as much as possible with the study and consider possible adjunct studies and sources of funding in order to be able to turn around an initial application quickly when the process is opened.

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