

Funded by Intramural Grants

Racial / Ethnic Differences in Stress Age Among Women

The purpose of the “Racial/Ethnic Differences in Stress Age among Women” study is to delve into the role stress age plays in health disparities among women. Differences in health status and disease disparity exist among racial/ethnic groups, particularly in women. While these disparities are not fully understood, one concept suggests that African American women may “age” quicker than Caucasian women due to experiences of lifelong stress and stressful events such as racism and discrimination, resulting in greater morbidity. This study aims to assess whether cortisol / DHEA and cortisol / DHEA-S ratios are associated with high levels of stress as measured by validated self-report questionnaires, and determine if there are racial / ethnic differences in these measures between African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic healthy women. 70 participants out of 105 women 20 – 40 years of age have been recruited to complete stress related questionnaires and have blood samples taken. Recruiting continues at the present time. (PI: K Fulda; Funded by: UNTHSC Intramural Grant).

Psychophysiological Regulation of Stress-Related Eating Behavior

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of psychological stress on relationships among cortisol, active ghrelin, psychological states, eating behavior, and food intake in obese women who identify themselves as stress-induced eaters.

Stress-Related Eating continued

Obesity has become a world-wide epidemic, yet few advances have been made in understanding obesity as a function of the complex interactions between biological and behavioral factors that regulate appetite and eating behavior. Stress-related eating has been identified as a major problem affecting the weight loss efforts of more than 60% of obese people and may be a key reason why weight loss interventions are largely unsuccessful for a substantial proportion of the target population. This research will provide a valuable foundation for related research that will lead to the eventual development and testing of evidence-based interventions to effectively promote sustained weight loss and reduce obesity-related diseases.

Since the study inception, a total of 93 participants were screened with only 36 eligible participants. 28 participants have completed the study and 8 are to be scheduled. Currently we are processing first phase participant’s salivary samples to identify cortisol levels. Those with high salivary cortisol levels will be identified as cortisol-reactive subjects and will be invited to the next portion of the study approximately in one month. The study goal is to process 40 cortisol-reactive subjects on whom will be randomly assigned to the stress or control condition. (PI: S Franks; Funded by: UNTHSC Intramural Grant)