

HOST: David Huang is the chief of the health promotion statistics branch at NCHS, and serves as the center's primary statistical advisor on the Healthy People initiative. Healthy People for decades now has been identifying science-based objectives with targets to monitor progress and motivate and focus action aimed at improving the health of the nation. David joined us to discuss the history of the program, what is going on presently, and what the future directions are.

HOST: So we can expect more products coming in the future - in the days, weeks, months ahead - from "Healthy People 2020." What about any differences between "Healthy People 2030" and "2020" - what are some of the more distinctive differences?

DAVID HUANG: I think the main difference is that there was really a concerted effort by the Department and its stakeholders to reduce the size of "Healthy People." "2020" was becoming very large and in some ways unwieldy, and it was felt that the initiative had grown too large to be really useful for its stakeholders. So as part of these efforts, we went through a process over the past several years where we reduced the size of the initiative itself. We went from about 1100 objectives with data in "2020" to 355 for "2030." In addition to that, there was also an effort to maintain a better balance and structure across the initiative. So during the development of "2030," after all of the objectives went through the approval process with the interagency steering committee – the federal interagency work group -there was actually another group that reviewed the objectives, the slate of objectives as a whole, and looked for balance. And there were actually some objectives that were removed, I think one or two that were added, and that was something that was not part of the "2020" process in terms of looking at the balance of objectives as a whole. As I mentioned earlier, we made sure that the objectives themselves were aligned with the latest science and that included aligning with the latest recommendations, the latest evidence, and also the latest issues that are important in the field of public health, specifically disease prevention and health promotion.

HOST: Any other future directions that you like to talk about as far as the Healthy People program?

DAVID HUANG: Well of course we're wrapping up "Healthy People 2020" with the release of a couple of more components that will comprise the rest of the "Healthy People 2020 Final Review." As part of that work, we're also working on a Statistical Note on the elimination of health disparities, specifically among racial and ethnic groups, as well as a more formal archive site for both "Healthy People 2020" and "Data 2020," which is the Healthy People 2020 database. Now for "Healthy People 2030," of course there is a lot to do over the next decade. And we're working on a variety of interactive tools, infographics, and products, working with our federal partners including ODPHP. And this will start with the launch of our database, "Data 2030," later this year. Of note also, our webinars that are related to the leading health indicators and overall health and well-being measures. And finally I'll note that we are working on a "Healthy People 2030" disparities tool in collaboration with the HHS Office of Minority Health and ODPHP.

HOST: One question that comes to mind - for "Healthy People 2030" are there any specific objectives dealing with the pandemic?

DAVID HUANG: So we don't have anything that is necessarily directly related to COVID, but certainly as many listeners will be aware there are many risk factors and diseases that are tied to COVID-19, and there's actually a customized list that the Department has created that has all of the “Healthy People 2030” objectives directly related to COVID and this list is actually available to the public from the “Healthy People 2030” website.

HOST: Anything else at all that we haven't covered here that you like to mention?

DAVID HUANG: Sure. I actually wanted to mention that in terms of the new decade the branch is actually looking forward to expanding outreach and dissemination efforts throughout the decade, and this is actually possible because we do have a more focused and parsimonious set of objectives in Healthy People 2030.

HOST: Very good – well, thank you David for joining us.

DAVID HUANG: You're welcome.

MUSIC BRIDGE:

HOST: Our thanks to David Huang for joining us on this edition of “Statcast.”

HOST: This week NCHS released a new [report](#) examining the prevalence of underlying chronic conditions among U.S. adults in the years leading into the pandemic. The analysis helps us understand how many people were at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness going into the pandemic. Seven risk factors were examined: obesity - in particular severe obesity, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD, serious heart conditions including heart failure, coronary artery disease, and cardiomyopathies, chronic kidney disease or CKD, and smoking. The data come from the 2015-2018 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, and showed that 3/4 of all adults in the U.S. had at least one of these chronic conditions or risk factors that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness, and over 86% of non-Hispanic black adults had one or more of these conditions.