

Rare body fat disorders workshop sheds light on obesity research

Researchers gathered at NIH in Bethesda, Md., on March 1 – 2 to gain new insights into the complex causes of obesity during the “Workshop on Rare Syndromic Body Fat Disorders: What Can They Teach Us?”

By studying rare disorders that affect the amount and distribution of body fat – including Prader-Willi syndrome, WAGR syndrome, and various lipodystrophies – researchers may uncover genes and biological pathways that regulate appetite and contribute to the more common forms of obesity and its adverse consequences.

Workshop attendees included basic physiology researchers, geneticists, fat cell biologists, clinical scientists, and clinicians. They heard updates about the state of the science in obesity research and NIH programs relevant to their research.

The workshop highlighted areas of research opportunity, including:

- development of new therapeutics to treat gene regulation disorders underlying rare obesity syndromes
- generation of cellular models of human genetic diseases
- genome-wide sequencing and exome analysis of people with extreme phenotypes, specifically those classified as rare syndromic body fat disorders

Research on rare body fat disorders is part of the 2011 Strategic Plan for NIH Obesity Research. The plan, which NIDDK had a leadership role in developing, emphasizes moving the science of obesity research from the laboratory to practical solutions.

A summary of the workshop will be posted on the NIDDK website. For more information: www2.niddk.nih.gov/News/Calendar/BodyFatDisorders2012.htm.

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