

UT Health Awarded Grants for MASLD Research

Latinos make up a majority of San Antonians and are disproportionately impacted by MASLD, formerly known as fatty liver disease.

June 10, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

The University of Texas (UT) School of Public Health San Antonio received three federal [grants](#) totaling nearly \$3 million. One grant totaling \$1 million will fund research on metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease ([MASLD](#), formerly known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease), announced Representative Joaquín Castro (D-Texas) at a press conference, reports [Texas Public Radio](#).

Another grant totaling \$963,000 will support the development of new techniques to treat MASLD and prevent liver failure.

Often referred to as “[silent diseases](#),” MASLD and MASH (metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis) are responsible for a growing proportion of advanced [liver disease](#), mirroring a global rise in [obesity](#). MASLD can lead to liver fibrosis, cirrhosis and even [liver cancer](#).

Latinos make up about 65% of San Antonio’s population, according to Texas Public Radio.

[One study estimates](#) that about 28% of Latinos in the United States have MASLD. What’s more, Mexican Americans are twice as likely to experience severe cases of MASLD, which, if left untreated, can result in liver failure and the need for an organ transplant.

Major risk factors for MASLD include obesity and [type 2 diabetes](#). For this reason, MASLD disproportionately affects Latinos because they are more likely to have diabetes compared with other racial groups.

With no effective approved medical therapies, management depends on lifestyle changes such as

weight loss and exercise.

“Type 2 diabetes is rampant in San Antonio and South Texas and among the Latino community,” Castro said. “This will be very helpful in combating that and hopefully developing drugs to help patients with [fatty liver disease].”

UT School of Public Health San Antonio represents a partnership between UT Health San Antonio and The University of Texas San Antonio. A third grant totaling \$1 million will help fund the renovation of a building to be shared by the two entities that will serve as the campus of the UT School of Public Health San Antonio, which will welcome its inaugural class in the fall.

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