

# Introduction of John P. Elder, PhD, MPH, FAAHB, Research Laureate, 2003

Brian R. Flay, DPhil, FAAHB, FSBM, FSCRA, Research Laureate, 2002

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With this award we declare that San Diego State University (SDSU) professor John P. Elder stands in the highest ranks among the investigators in our field, both in the United States and internationally.

John's fluency in Spanish, his extensive work in Mexico, and his consulting in numerous other developing countries give him a broader than usual perspective on the application of behavioral and social sciences in public health and education. Dr Elder has consulted for USAID, Rockefeller Foundation and WHO projects in 15 different countries in Asia, Latin America, and Europe. His international work has been in the areas of child survival, maternal and child health, dengue fever control, research design, and social marketing.

John's work spans tobacco use, sun exposure, diet/nutrition, and physical activity. He has developed interventions for and conducted research in schools as well as in the mass media and in community-wide efforts, with particular attention to the health and related problems of Latinos. He has shown scholarly creativity, courage, and great energy in tackling such complexity systematically and with rigor. He has been an inspiration to a field struggling with both the programmatic and methodological challenges of multicultural contexts.

Professor Elder's doctoral studies were in clinical psychology at West Virginia University. His early-career work as staff psychologist and clinical director of a 4-county mental health facility in West Virginia prepared him for his work as intervention director at the Pawtucket Heart Health Program and a faculty position at Brown University. While doing this, John completed an MPH at Boston University School of Medicine. His experiences with the Pawtucket program and his public health education prepared John to join the public health faculty at SDSU

in 1984 and to take on the responsibility of directing the Center for Behavioral and Community Health Studies ("BACH") in 1988. He remains director of the BACH to this day. Generations of John's students now populate the fields of public health, health education, and health promotion across this country and others.

Dr Elder has been principal investigator on more than a dozen major research grants and 10 contracts, and coinvestigator on about 20 others concerned with cardiovascular disease, tobacco use, sun exposure, diet/nutrition, and physical activity. John is currently Principal Investigator of 4 large (\$1.3-3 million) NIH grants concerned with smoking prevention for Latino middle school students, targeted and tailored nutrition communication for Latinos, physical activity for adolescent girls, and obesity prevention in Latino home and community environments.

Professor Elder has published almost 200 articles in peer-reviewed journals covering the span of public health, community health, preventive medicine, behavioral medicine, behavior therapy, social marketing, dietetics and nutrition, tobacco and other addictions, cancer, epidemiology, health policy, military medicine, college health, school health, health education, health psychology and, of course, health behavior. John has authored or coauthored 25 chapters and book reviews and 3 books on behavior change, the latest being *Behavior Change and Public Health in the Developing World*. He serves on the Editorial Boards of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *Family and Community Health*, and the *Journal of Migrant Health*, as well as the *American Journal of Health Behavior*.

John's research in public health, health education, or health promotion interventions to improve the health of Latinos, both in this country and our neighbors to the south is at the forefront of all such work. He has led the way in helping Latino

populations change behavioral patterns and environments to improve their health. He has been recognized and honored for his work on multiple occasions. He received the Distinguished Achievement Award from the San Diego Chapter of the American Heart Association in 1986. In 1989, he received the Breakthrough Award for Creativity from the Academy for Educational Development for his work on the Honduras ARI Control Program. John

has twice received the SDSU Alumni and Associates Award for Outstanding Professor in the College of Health and Human Services (1989-90 and 1995-96).

On behalf of the American Academy of Health Behavior, it gives me great pleasure to present the Research Laureate Medallion to Professor John P. Elder, and to thank the Board of the Academy for this privilege and for putting me in such distinguished company.