

Brenner FIT[®]

FAMILIES IN TRAINING

2024 Annual Report



COOK EAT
PLAY REPEAT

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Brenner FIT

A Letter from the Director



“Safe, effective, and kind” continues to be Brenner FIT’s unofficial motto. We believe it is as important as ever as the field of obesity medicine makes huge strides in improving care and access to evidence-based treatment for children and families:

- **SAFE** because we balance managing weight, changing habits, and improving health against the risk of eating disorders, which are 2-3x higher in children in bigger bodies. Also, we want to safely do this within the family system where sometimes arguments or disagreements can arise when families are working to change their lifestyle. We want families to grow closer with each other as they undertake this health journey.
- **EFFECTIVE** because we are gaining access to newer medications, which are even more effective (and safer) when combined with evidence-based nutrition, physical activity, and behavior change resources. Treatment is different for every person and every family, and we work with families to figure out the best path to make it the most effective.
- **KIND** because weight bias, stigma, and discrimination are still incredibly prevalent in our society. Youth and families are made to feel that they are at fault for their weight and health, and that simply “eating less and moving more” is all they need to do. We know, through research and experience, that this is just not true. So, we strive to provide care that is sensitive and understanding and free of bias.

As the only child- and family-focused program in our area, and with the only local board-certified pediatric specialists in obesity medicine, Brenner FIT brings a collective 100+ years of experience to the Piedmont region ... and beyond. We continue to be active in research, education, advocacy, and community outreach, while still doing all we can to increase our reach to families and patients through expanded clinical offerings, telemedicine, and community classes. We invite you to learn more about all we did this past year and will continue to do in the coming one.

Sincerely,
Joseph A. “Joey” Skelton, MD, MS, FAAP, FTOS, DABOM
Director, Brenner FIT (Families In Training)
Atrium Health Levine Children’s Brenner Children’s Hospital
Professor of Pediatrics
Professor of Epidemiology and Prevention
Wake Forest University School of Medicine

Everyone was so kind, loving,
and understanding.

- BFIT Family

Key Successes from 2024

Patient Care

- Moved to our **new clinic** at 755 Highland Oaks Drive
- Completed **2,264** patient visits
- Onboarded **7** new team members to support overall patient care

Professional Education

- Directly impacted **257** post-grad students through our various programming
- Presented **7** talks for the professional community

Community Engagement

- Provided **91** classes (cooking, activity, and Academy) free to the community
- Instructed over **1,095** participants from these classes

Research

- Continued work on **5** grants to further childhood obesity research
- Contributed **11** articles to the academic community

PATIENT CARE

Brenner FIT Clinic

Patient care is at the heart of the Brenner FIT program. Every decision we make prioritizes the well-being of the children and families we serve, which is why we take a **multidisciplinary, evidence-based approach to treatment**. Our three dedicated teams—**two English-speaking and one Spanish-speaking**—include pediatricians, dietitians, family counselors, and activity specialists who collaborate to address patient needs and provide personalized care. Nearly every patient visit, whether in-person or virtual, includes professionals from multiple disciplines, ensuring **comprehensive support**.

At the end of 2024, the team made changes to clinic workflow so that more New Patient Visits could be added. With an additional change planned for January 2025, we **expect a 30+% increase in New Patient visits** to meet our growing demand.

At Brenner FIT, we go beyond traditional weight-focused approaches. We take a parenting-centered approach that incorporates the **Ellyn Satter Division of Responsibility** framework, guiding families in building positive relationships with food, activity, and each other. By fostering a love for eating and movement, we shift the focus from weight loss and restrictive diets to **sustainable habits that promote lifelong health and well-being**.

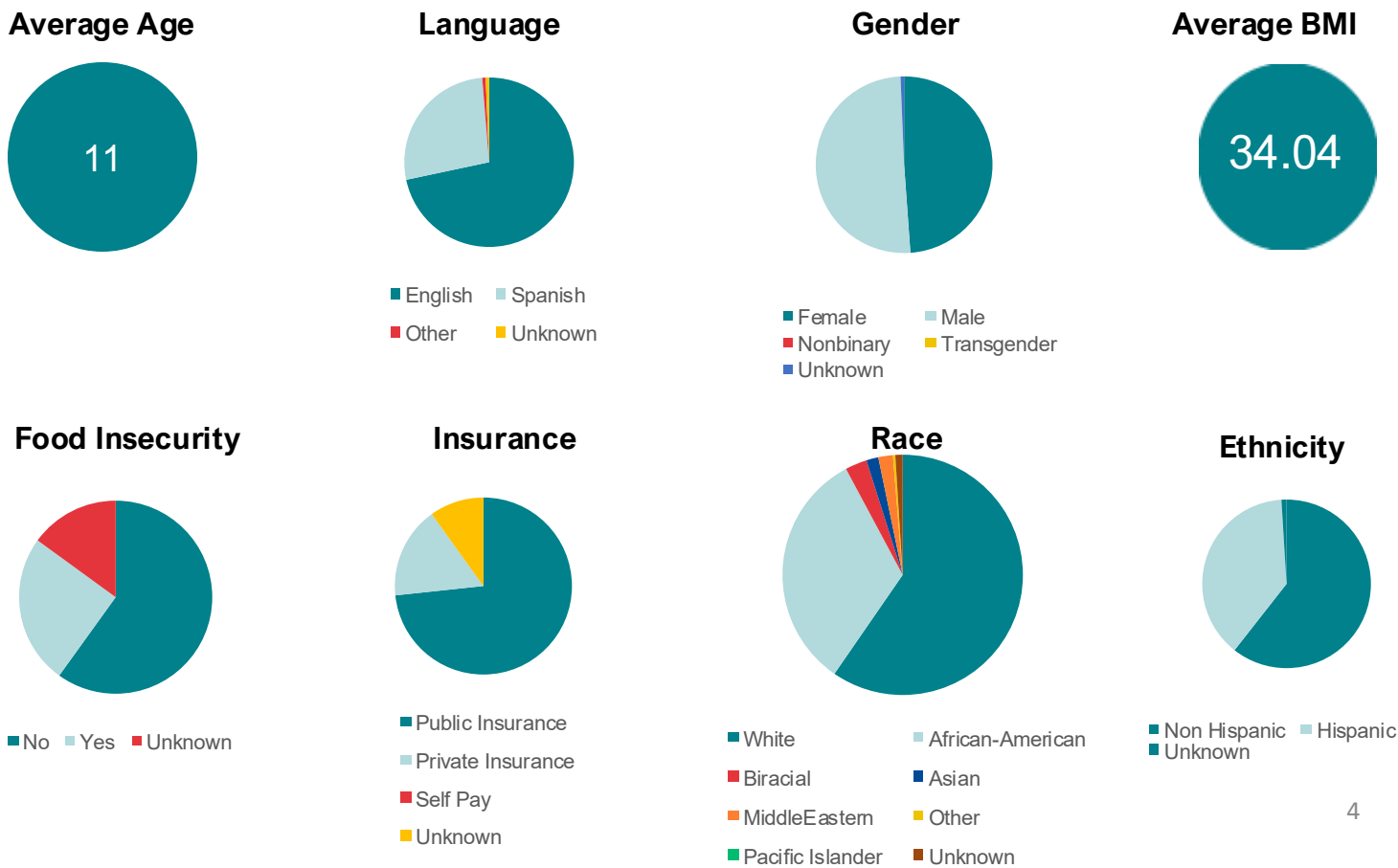


I really love this program.
- BFIT Family



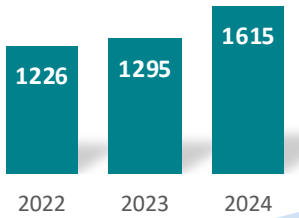
Learn more about
Brenner FIT

Patient Demographics Data based on new patients entering the program in 2024



A Family's Path Through the Program

There's no judgement. - BFIT Family



1

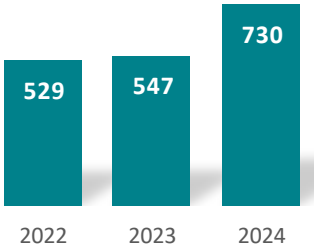
Referral

Children ages 2-18 with BMI ≥ 95%ile for age and sex are referred by their medical provider.

2

Online Orientation

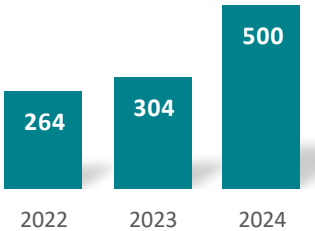
Caregivers learn what to expect and can decide if the program is right for their family.



3

Virtual Evening Class

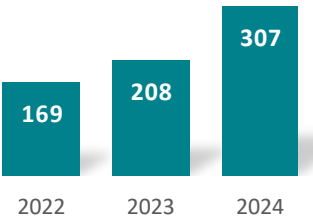
For caregivers to learn about Brenner FIT's approach and prepare for clinical visits.



4

First Clinic Visits

Children and their families meet their clinical team and get started with their first health goal.



5

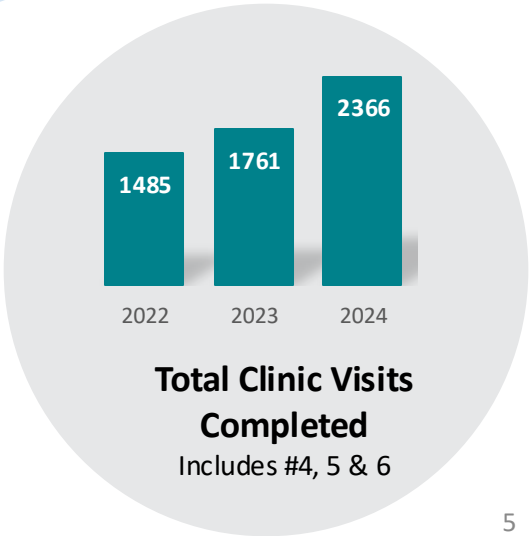
Follow-up Clinic Visits (virtual option)

Families complete follow-up visits every 3-4 weeks for 6 months.

6

Six-month Medical Review Visit

Family sees the doctor and decides next steps.



Our Clinic Moved!!!



Since December 2024, visitors to Brenner FIT have experienced our new and improved clinic space! We are thrilled to offer a thoughtfully designed environment that enhances the care and experience of our patients and families. Our updated space includes a dedicated check-in area, a private waiting room, expanded space for weight training equipment, and a third medical exam room. And we're not done yet—exciting new additions are planned for 2025, so stay tuned!

Y'all listen to us and give great feedback and suggestions.

- BFIT Family

Metabolic Syndrome and Prevention Clinic

Established in 2016, the Metabolic Syndrome and Prevention Clinic extends Brenner FIT's services. Children visit a Brenner FIT physician every 3 to 6 months, with nutrition support through a Brenner FIT Registered Dietitian if needed.

The clinic treats children with conditions like high cholesterol, pre-diabetes, and abnormal weight gain. Families concerned about weight can join Brenner FIT clinic or the Brenner FIT Academy: For Families program. This partnership reflects Brenner FIT's commitment to meeting the needs of the community.

Year	Patient Visits
2022	234
2023	602
2024	510

* January and February data missing in 2024

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Brenner FIT Academy: For Families

The **6-week virtual community program**, established in 2015, is a free, year-round resource for parents seeking support in managing their child's weight and health. Since going virtual in 2021, it has been offered 20 times, helping families create lasting change.

The course provides parents with Brenner FIT tools and strategies to build lifelong healthy habits together.

We remain committed to enhancing the program to meet families' evolving needs. This year, the course was thoughtfully updated from 8 weeks to 6 weeks to better suit busy schedules while maintaining its impactful content.

Year-end review:

- **4** sessions offered in English
- **2** sessions offered in Spanish
- **60** caregivers attended the series



Upcoming Class Dates



Community Connections

Media

Brenner FIT staff actively participated in and were highlighted in news interviews and articles throughout the year.

In **2024 topics/features** included:

- Melissa Moses- "Recipes for families resolving to eat healthier in the new year" (Fox8 WGHP)
- Joey Skelton- "Medications for Obesity" (Reuters)

Brenner FIT actively shares information for the community on our social media pages.

- Facebook- BrennerFIT
- Instagram- Brenner_FIT
- Youtube- @brennerfit6698

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Brenner FIT collaborated with the Student Wellness Committee to provide parents with resources and educational materials.

William G White Jr. Family YMCA

With guidance from Brenner FIT, WFUSOM medical students led 2 cooking class series for teens through the Reaching Our Potential program, which offers free YMCA memberships and programming.

Cooking and Activity Classes

Brenner FIT offers fun, interactive cooking and activity classes designed for families in our clinic and the community. These engaging classes are free and packed with hands-on learning to inspire healthy habits.

Participants sign up
on our website



Cooking Classes

At Brenner FIT, our Teaching Kitchen is at the heart of our hands-on cooking experiences. We offer a variety of classes, including:

- **Family Cooking Sessions:** Accommodating up to **8** families per class.
- **Kids-Only Classes:** Welcoming up to **16** to take part

Led by our expert team of Brenner FIT chefs and Registered Dietitians, these classes are designed to teach practical cooking skills while bringing families together.

Exciting Updates for 2024:

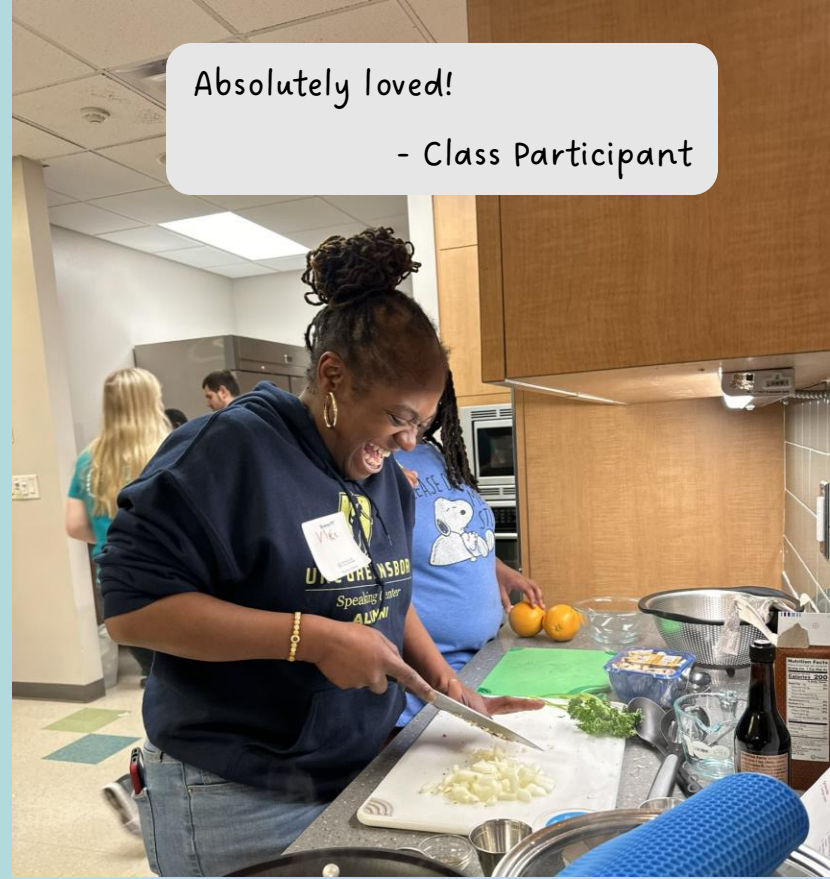
In 2024, Brenner FIT expanded our culinary team by hiring **3** new chefs to help us further our mission.

Year-end Review:

- **71** free cooking classes offered
- **811** individuals participated in our classes

Absolutely loved!

- Class Participant





Activity Classes

Brenner FIT provided diverse opportunities for families to stay active, including open gym, yoga, and dodgeball at Amos Cottage, as well as dodgeball and soccer at RISE Indoor Sports, led by Wake Forest School of Medicine students. Additional activities included Serve First tennis clinics and swim safety classes with Winston-Salem Recreation & Parks, promoting movement and engagement for all ages.

Year-end Review:

- **14** free activity classes offered
- **224** individuals participated in our classes



Ready to do this more.

- Class Participant

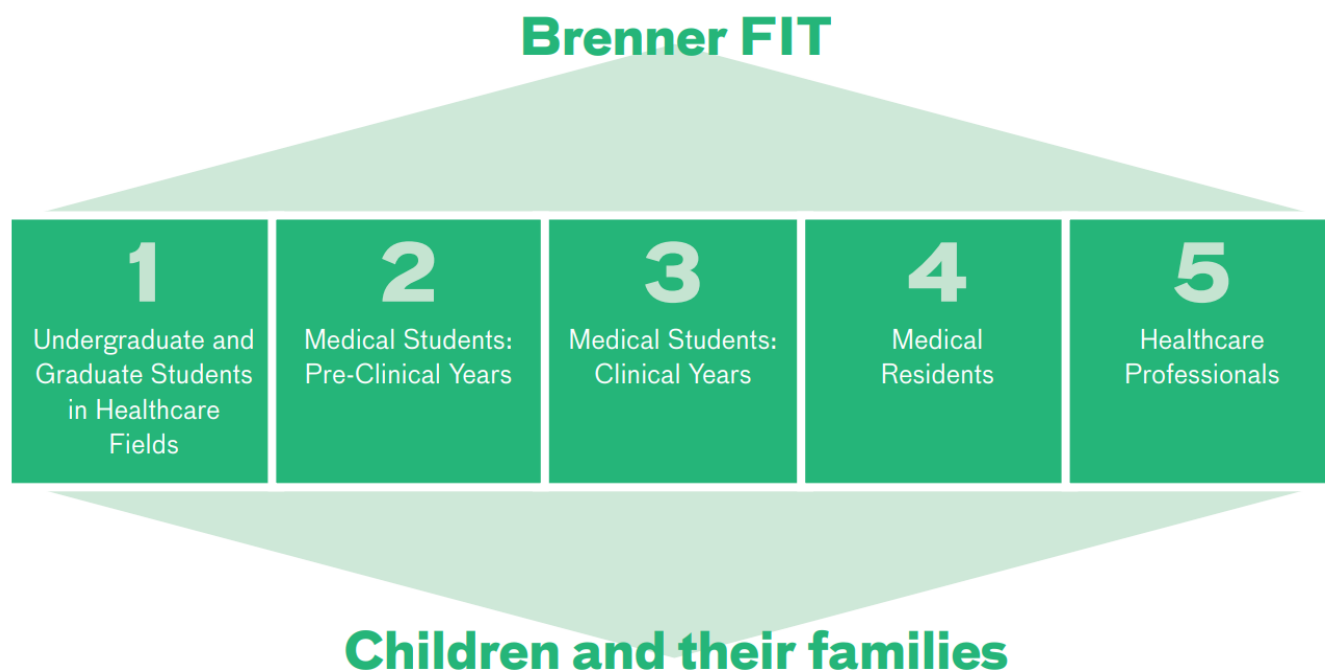


A note from our Activity Specialist:

At a soccer class at Rise Indoor Sports, one shy kid stood off to the side, unsure about joining in. Another kid noticed and came over with a big smile, asking, "Want to kick the ball around with me?" Soon, they were passing the ball back and forth, laughing and having fun. By the end of class, the shy kid was right in the middle of the game, playing and cheering with their new friend. Brenner FIT loves seeing moments like these, where kids help each other feel included and turn simple activities into special memories.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The Brenner FIT team believes that educating future and current professionals is essential to ensuring families receive comprehensive support across all areas of care. We achieve this through outreach and education at every stage of professional development. Our goal is to make a positive impact on children and families both within our practice and beyond.



1. Undergraduate and Graduate Students in Healthcare Fields



Internships

Brenner FIT offers internships across various disciplines to help educate and prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Year-end Review:

- Brenner FIT hosted **4** students
 - **3 undergraduate interns** majoring in Public Health, Spanish, Psychology/Human Development & Family Science
 - **1 Dietetic intern**
- Students completed **over 712 hours**

Dietetic intern Talsi Case, from Appalachian State, leading a community cooking class.

2. Medical Students: Pre-Clinical Years

Doctors in the Kitchen

In this interactive culinary medicine course, Dr. Skelton guides first-year medical students through a five-part series focused on fundamental cooking skills and nutrition. The course is available in both the fall and spring semesters.

In total, **42** students completed the course in 2024.

3. Medical Students: Clinical Years

Didactic Presentations

Twice a year, Brenner FIT conducts a two-hour interdisciplinary lecture for **third-year medical students** beginning their pediatric rotation. This session introduces students to the evaluation and treatment of childhood obesity. In 2024, a total of **113** students attended.

Clinical/Research Rotations

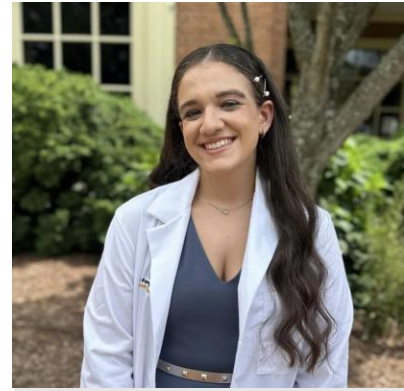
Third-year medical students can spend a week with Brenner FIT physicians during their pediatrics core rotation, gaining foundational knowledge in pediatric obesity. **Six** students participated this past year.

Fourth-year medical students can join a four-week clinical or research rotation, working alongside the Brenner FIT team in daily clinic operations.

Culinary Medicine Elective

The Culinary Medicine elective, led by Dr. Skelton, is a four-week course that explores the impact of food on health and wellness. Brenner FIT team members also contribute to the didactic sessions.

In spring 2024, **18 fourth-year medical students** participated, making it one of the most popular electives at WFUSOM. The prevailing feedback on this elective was "GREATEST ROTATION OF MEDICAL SCHOOL!!!!"



"Doctors in the Kitchen gave me hands on experience with both the cooking techniques and nutrition that we ask our families to apply in their own lives, giving me a better understanding of both how difficult and how rewarding it can be to cook healthy meals with friends. As a Brenner FIT volunteer, it's been wonderful being able to work with families in the community and see how much confidence kids can gain in the kitchen after only a few classes. "

Sam Bonge, Class of 2027



4. Medical Residents

Clinical Elective Rotations and Shadowing

First- and second-year pediatric residents each spend a day in the clinic as part of their chronic care rotation, with **18** residents participating in 2024. Additionally, pediatric and family medicine residents can opt for a 2- or 4-week elective for a deeper, hands-on experience in caring for patients and families affected by obesity.

Didactic Presentations

A total of **14 pediatric residents** participated in our Academic Half Day session, which covers the latest guidelines and medical information to help future pediatricians care for patients with weight concerns. The sessions also include hands-on cooking experience and a case-based discussion on obesity.



5. Healthcare Professionals

Brenner FIT Academy: For Professionals

Since 2019, the Brenner FIT Academy: For Professionals has provided CME training for healthcare providers to enhance their skills in working with children affected by obesity. After transitioning to a self-guided curriculum in November 2023, **45** professionals have begun the course, with **32** successfully completing it. The training is divided into five sections, focusing on Brenner FIT's evidence-based approach. Upon completion, participants earn 3 CME credits, gain access to Brenner FIT's educational handouts, and receive monthly emails with additional educational materials. To date, **230** healthcare professionals have been impacted by this course.

Academic Presentations

Abstracts Presented

- Lassiter R, White B, **Skelton JA**, Ip E, Vitolins M, Brown CL. Parental concerns about tap water associated with children's increased consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting. Toronto, CA. May 2024. Platform Presentation.
- Brown CL, **Skelton JA**, Ip E, Vitolins M. Parental Concerns about Picky Eating and Undereating, Feeding Practices, and Child's Weight. Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting. Toronto, CA. May 2024. Platform Presentation.

Invited Presentations

- A Quick Trip Through the 2023 AAP Obesity Clinical Practice Guidelines; Practical Pediatrics; April 14, 2024; Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Gail Cohen
- Panel Discussion: "Preparation for a Dietetic Internship"; NCAND Educational Meeting; April 19th, 2024; Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Melissa Moses
- American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition. Invited Speaker "Exploring Overlaps of Body Positivity and Health Promotion" Orlando, Florida. Joey Skelton.
- Evaluation and Treatment of Children and Adolescents with Obesity; Family Medicine Noon Conference; December 5, 2024; Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Gail Cohen.
- Pediatric Obesity and Eating Disorders; North Carolina Obesity Society Inaugural Meeting; December 14, 2024; Charlotte, North Carolina. Gail Cohen and Sarah Schaller.
- Pediatrics Lipids for the Primary Care Provider; Practical Pediatrics; April 14, 2024; Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Joey Skelton.
- Crain NA, Cohen GM, Skelton JA. Success of Topiramate to Slow Progression of Blount Disease in a Toddler: a case study. Academic Pediatrics Association Region IV Conference. Charlottesville, Virginia. February 2024. Poster Presentation.



RESEARCH

Grants

SIT (Stay In Treatment) Study:

This study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is completing its final year. Led by Dr. Skelton, this multi-site study (Boston Children's Hospital, Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Mercy Children's Hospital in Kansas City) developed a statistical model to predict who would finish and who may drop out of treatment. In this final year, the model is being applied to prevent dropout. Findings will hopefully inform efforts to keep families engaged in treatment, and lead to innovative solutions to prevent attrition.

IMPACT (INCREASED MONITORING OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND CALORIES WITH TECHNOLOGY): Completed in 2024, this NIH-funded study, awarded by the NIH to Dr. Justin Moore again, in partnership with Dr. Skelton and the Brenner FIT team, developed a mobile health (mHealth) intervention to use in clinics offering pediatric weight management. A broader project to extend this intervention across the Advocate Enterprise is under development.



DYAD PLUS:

This 2-year grant awarded by the NIH to Dr. Justin Moore (Department of Implementation Science), in partnership with Dr. Skelton and Brenner FIT, designed a coordinated approach to parent-child weight management. The project wrapped up this year and is being analyzed; next steps are being planned.

FOOD FUSSINESS, PEDIATRIC OBESITY, AND THE FAMILY UNIT: this project was led by Rebecca Walker, a Wake Forest medical student and lead volunteer for Brenner FIT, that explored the prevalence and impact of picky eating in children and siblings in Brenner FIT, particularly in how it influences the family system. Ms. Walker won the NIDDK Research Award at the annual Wake Forest Medical Student Research Program Day.

DISCOVERY Study: this NIH-funded study is taking part at 15 sites across the nation to learn more about Type 2 Diabetes in children. Dr. Skelton is a co-Investigator at the Wake Forest site, working with Principal Investigator Dr. Elizabeth Jensen in Epidemiology and Prevention.

Publications

- **Cohen GM**, Brown CL, **Skelton JA**. What Parents Should Expect From the New AAP Obesity Guidelines. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2024 Jan 1;178(1):100. doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.4852. PMID: 38010664.
- Fleischman A, Hampel S, Rhodes ET, Sweeney B, Eneli I, **Skelton JA**. Implementation of Recommended Treatment for Children in Weight Management Programs: Lessons from the Stay In Treatment Study Sites. *Preventive Medicine* 2024. IN PRESS
- Krishnamurthy S, Chait JS, Reddy MN, Galli LD, **Skelton JA**. Food Insecurity and Family Dynamics: A Systematic Review. *Fam Community Health*. 2024 Jul-Sep 01;47(3):219-230. doi: 10.1097/FCH.0000000000000401. Epub 2024 May 16. PMID: 38758024.
- O'Leary A, Lahey T, Lovato J, Loftness B, Douglas A, **Skelton J**, **Cohen JG**, Copeland WE, McGinnis RS, McGinnis EW. Using Wearable Digital Devices to Screen Children for Mental Health Conditions: Ethical Promises and Challenges. *Sensors*. 2024; 24(10):3214. <https://doi.org/10.3390/s24103214>
- Ajja, Rahma; **Skelton, Joseph A.**; Peluso, Alexandra G.; Singletary, Camelia R.; **Cohen, Gail M.**; Turner-McGrievy, Gabrielle; Ip, Edward; Miller, David; Moore, Justin B.. Randomized Clinical Trial to Increase Self-Monitoring of Physical Activity and Eating Behaviors in Youth: A Feasibility Study. *Translational Journal of the ACSM* 9(4):e000267, Fall 2024. | DOI: 10.1249/TJX.0000000000000267
- Choi A, Vitolins MZ, **Skelton JA**, Ip EH, Lucas CB, Brown CL. How parent stress and COVID-19 impact on the family are associated with parental pressure to eat during COVID-19. *Eating Behaviors*. In press.
- Crain NA, **Cohen GM**, Ravish ME, **Skelton JA**. Success of Topiramate to Slow Progression of Blount Disease in a Toddler: a case study. *Radiology Case Reports*. 2024; IN PRESS
- Patel P, Samant A, Del Rosario K, Vitolins MZ, **Skelton JA**, Ip EH, Lucas CB, Brown CL. Differences in Maternal and Paternal Pressure to Eat and Perception of Household Responsibilities. *PLOS ONE*. 2024. Epub ahead of print.
- Crain NA, **Cohen GM**, Ravish ME, **Skelton JA**. Success of topiramate to slow progression of Blount disease in a toddler: A case study. *Radiol Case Rep* 2024;19(11):5308-12.
- Ajja R, **Skelton JA**, Peluso AG, Singletary CR, **Cohen GM**, Turner-McGrievy G, Ip E, Miller D, Moore JB. Randomized Clinical Trial to Increase Self-Monitoring of Physical Activity and Eating Behaviors in Youth: A Feasibility Study. *Translational Journal of the ACSM* 2024;9(4):e000267.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteer

Volunteers are an **integral part** of our community outreach programming and with our cooking and activity classes. In 2024, our wonderful volunteers completed a total of **510** hours providing us with **vital support** for our various programs and classes. Of that group, **5** volunteers individually completed over **20** hours each, reaching our **Bronze-level** volunteer status.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with Brenner FIT, please email us at brennerfit@wakehealth.edu.

Donate

Much of what Brenner FIT does is **not covered by insurance**, and many of Brenner FIT's families **are unable to pay out-of-pocket**. Donations help Brenner FIT improve the health of children and families in the Triad and surrounding communities. If you are interested in supporting the work of Brenner FIT, please contact Brenner FIT (contact information is on the back), or Drew Schindler (336-716-6907, dschindler@wakehealth.edu) in the Office of Philanthropy and Alumni Relations.

Examples of how donations help Brenner FIT:

\$100,000	Provide salary for additional staff members
\$25,000	Fund Brenner FIT Academies for 1 year
\$10,000	Purchase cooking class groceries for 1 year
\$5,000	Support creation of educational videos
\$1,000	Purchase activity class supplies for 1 year
\$100	Provide an instructor for a cooking or activity class
\$50	Purchase groceries for a cooking demonstration

Donating online made easy



Thank You

Brenner FIT relies on the support of our gracious and generous donors. With **heartfelt appreciation**, we recognize the following donors (monetary donations and gifts-in-kind):

- **Morris and Gertrude Brenner Foundation**
- **Mrs. Susan H. Cohen**
- **Junction 311 Endurance Sports**
- **Christina Santos** - The **Joel B. Miller, M.D. Pro Humanitate PA Award Fund** recognizes a graduating PA Studies student who embodies Dr. Miller's character and Wake Forest University's **Pro Humanitate** motto. Each year, the recipient receives a cash award and selects a humanitarian cause within Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist to receive a donation. This year's awardee, **Christina Santosa**, chose the **Brenner FIT Kitchen** as the beneficiary.



I really thank ya'll for making us feel so welcome and heard.

- Brenner FIT Family





OUR TEAM

Joseph Skelton, MD, MS, FAAP, FTOS

Director

Professor of Pediatrics

Professor of Epidemiology and Prevention

Dara Garner-Edwards, MSW, LCSW

Associate Director

Family Counselor

Certified Positive Discipline Parent Educator

Lorri Busby, MSW

Family Support Specialist and Social Worker

Gail Cohen, MD, MS, FAAP, FTOS

Pediatrician

Clinical Professor of Pediatrics

Melissa Dellinger, RDN, LDN

Dietitian, TeleFIT Coordinator

Spanish-speaking

Christine Jordan, EdS, LMFT

Facilitator, Brenner FIT Academy: For Families

Rebecca Lane

Brenner FIT Chef

Spanish-speaking

Jewel Lewis, PT, DPT

Physical Therapist

Kim Crews

Senior Administrative Support Associate

Certified Admin Software Specialist

Referral Coordinator

Davius Miller

Brenner FIT Chef

Melissa Moses, MS, RDN, LDN

Dietitian, Program Manager- Clinical Nutrition

N'Gai Dickerson

Brenner FIT Chef

Janet Olivares

Brenner FIT Program Assistant

Volunteer Coordinator

Spanish-speaking

Crissy Faison

Brenner FIT Chef

Sherry Frino, PT

Physical Therapist

Rose Rodriguez

Patient Services Representative II

Spanish-speaking

Destiny Godfrey, BS

Exercise, Activity and Play Specialist

Intern Coordinator

Sarah Schaller, MSW, LCSW

Family Counselor and Coordinator

Spanish-speaking

Angelica Guzman, MA

Program Manager, Brenner FIT en Español

Certified Positive Discipline Parent Educator,

Certification in research ethics and compliance

Certified Health Coach

Spanish-speaking

Stephanie Strucinski

Brenner FIT Chef

Anjelica Yancey, CMA II

Certified Medical Assistant II

Prescription Prior Authorization Management

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BrennerChildrens.org/BrennerFIT

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