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Newsroom

Michael Goran named Atkins Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes

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By **Monika Guttman**

Amid festive balloons at a celebratory luncheon, Michael Goran, professor of preventive medicine, was awarded the Dr. Robert C. & Veronica Atkins Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes by Veronica Atkins and officials of The Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation.

Atkins, who chairs the board of directors of the foundation named in honor of her late husband, said Goran's work "fits so well with our mission, which is to find the causes of diseases like diabetes and how to prevent this disease."

Robert C. Atkins, the renowned cardiologist who pioneered a controlled carbohydrate approach to weight management and disease, died in 2003.

The Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation is dedicated to providing funding for research and education on the role of controlled carbohydrate nutritional protocols in treating and preventing a wide range of diseases and medical conditions.

In accepting the \$2 million chair, Goran noted that the gift will "go a long way to relieving the epidemics of childhood obesity and diabetes. Childhood obesity has tremendous implications for our future, and change will have to come from great coalitions of people working together. This chair will help that happen."

Goran is well known for his pioneering studies of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes risk. He has examined the role of exercise in preventing childhood obesity and reducing risk for type 2 diabetes in children, and he is also one of the few researchers delving into the ways in which ethnicity can complicate the health problems faced by overweight children.

Goran has won the Nutrition Society Medal for Research, the Norman Kretchmer Award from the American Society for Clinical Nutrition, and the Lily Award from the North American Association for the Study of Obesity. He is currently studying the differences in decreased sugar versus increased dietary fiber and weight training on obesity and type 2 diabetes risk factors in children.

The Atkins Foundation initially funded one of his small pilot studies on dietary interventions in children in 2004, said Goran. "The relationship grew from there."

The endowed chair "provides funds that can be used to support new pilot projects or to branch off in new directions," he added. "This has already taken the morale of our group to a whole new level."

The Dr. Robert C. & Veronica Atkins Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes at the Keck School of Medicine of USC is the first Atkins Foundation grant on the west coast, but it is one of several grants at major research institutions intended "to create a synergy that will move research in this field forward," noted John Mezzanotte, one of the Atkins Foundation trustees present at the Edmundson Faculty Center event.

Other Atkins chairs have been established at Duke University and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.



From left: Sharon Mueller, director of The Robert C. Atkins Foundation; John Mezzanotte, trustee of the foundation; Veronica Atkins, wife of the late Robert C. Atkins and chair of the Foundation; Michael Goran, professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine; Abby Bloch, vice president of programs and research for the Foundation; Clive Metz, trustee of the Foundation; and Tom Buchanan, chief of the division of endocrinology, metabolism and diabetes at the Keck School of Medicine.

Photo/Monika Guttman

In 1999, Dr. Robert C. Atkins and his wife, Veronica, established The Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation, Inc. The Foundation collaborates with leading professionals and organizations nationwide to fund research in nutrition and the management and treatment of obesity and associated diseases. With nearly \$40 million in assets, it is managed by the National Philanthropic Trust, an independent charity and one of the top 40 grant makers in the United States.