Community Policy Brief: Concept Mapping to Examine Obesity among Mexican Immigrants Using Concept Mapping within a Community–Academic Partnership to Examine Obesity among Mexican Immigrants

Karen T. D'Alonzo, PhD, RN, APNC, FAAN[1], Frances Munet Vilaró, PhD, RN[1], Maya E. Joseph, MS, RN[1], Victoria Oyeneye[1],

Lisa Garsman, PhD, RN, APNC[2], Scott R. Rosas PhD[3], Manuel Castañeda,[4], Maria Vivar[5]

(1) Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, School of Nursing; (2) St. Peter's University School of Nursing; (3) Concept Systems Incorporated; (4) New Brunswick Tomorrow; (5) Lazos America Unida

Purpose

- To develop a comprehensive community–academic partnership between New Brunswick Tomorrow and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, designed to address health issues among Mexican immigrant families in New Brunswick, New Jersey

- Specific objectives were to

    (1) Explore the community-defined factors thought to contribute to weight gain among Mexican immigrant families

    (2) Determine how current social stressors, policies, and programs may increase food insecurity and obesity in this group, and

    (3) Identify community-defined priorities for obesity prevention programs.

Problem

- Weight gain is common after migration to a new country.

- Mexican immigrant families are more likely to gain weight following migration to the United States yet are less likely to have enough food for all family members (food insecurity).

- Social stressors, such as unemployment, discrimination, and the threat of deportation may contribute to both food insecurity and weight gain in this population.

Findings

- Using group concept mapping in the brainstorming sessions, community members identified a list of 80 statements thought to contribute to weight gain among Mexican immigrant families.

- These statements were sorted into nine clusters that were organized into three regions

    (1) Intrapersonal factors;

    (2) Community-level factors; and

    (3) Social policy related barriers.

- Statements reflecting the impact of immigration-related stressors were found in all three regions, addressing participants' fears of deportation and the prioritization of resources away from healthy eating, resulting in food insecurity.

- Community members identified five priority areas for intervention planning:

    (1) Lack of exercise;

    (2) Lack of knowledge of a healthy diet;

    (3) Expense of healthy foods;

    (4) Junk food; and

    (5) Stress management.

Who Should Care Most?

- Mexican immigrants and their families, local government officials, health care providers, educators.

Recommendations for Action

- Results suggest high levels of social stress are contributing to food insecurity and obesity among Mexican immigrant families.

- The areas identified for program planning reflect the need for a multilayered approach toward obesity prevention.