

September-October 2010

**Health-Literate Youth: Evolving Challenges for Health Educators**

**Joyce V. Fetro**

Dr. Fetro's AAHE Scholar presentation was given at the 2010 annual meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**An Evaluation of Mi Familia No Fuma: Family Cohesion and Impact on Secondhand Smoking**

**Jon Law, Michael Kelly, Pema Garcia, and Thom Taylor**

Background: Family cohesion may be a factor to prevent exposure of Hispanics in United States to secondhand smoke. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to evaluate one permutation of Mi Familia No Fuma (MFNF) and its resulting outputs or proximal client outcomes. Methods: MFNF is an approach to secondhand smoke prevention, using family cohesion through a family photo and one-year pledge. The intervention targets both smokers and non-smokers in the household. A cross-sectional survey was conducted after the intervention. Results: Of the 499 participants, 23% (N=106) self-identified as smokers. Daily smokers reported an increase in willingness to create a smoke-free home. Family cohesion did not directly influence intent to create a smoke-free home or willingness to discuss the pledge with relatives. It was associated with increased belief that smoking in the home increases health risks and plans to place the photo/pledge in the home. Discussion: Levels of acculturation may affect individuals' willingness to enforce a smoke-free pledge in the home. Translation to Health Education Practice: Family cohesion is a relevant construct, particularly when included in a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reduce tobacco use within a Hispanic community.

**College Students' Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions of Risks Regarding Intentional Sun Exposure: A 17-Year Follow-Up**

**Michael Felts, Sloane C. Burke, Karen Vail-Smith, and Lauren MacKenzie Whetstone**

Background: Skin cancer, the most common cancer in the United States, accounts for over one million cases per year. Risk can be mediated by limiting UV radiation exposure, yet efforts to increase adoption of protective measures have met with limited success. Purpose: This study compares the results of surveys conducted in 1990 and 2007 assessing the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of college students regarding intentional sun exposure. Methods: The 44-item "Sun and Skin Inventory" was administered to students enrolled in personal health classes during the fall semesters in 1990 and 2007. Results: Mean knowledge scores were no different in 2007 than 1990 and knowledge scores were not related to sunbathing frequency in either survey. Risk perception was negatively related to sunbathing frequency and students reporting greater perceived risk had more positive attitudes toward protective behaviors. Overall, sunbathing behavior was unchanged over 17 years, but students did report more frequent sunscreen use in the latter survey. Discussion: Despite educational efforts regarding risks related to intentional UV exposure, high risk behavior continues among adults. Translation to Health Education Practice: Comprehensive prevention initiatives that include education as well

as policy and environmental strategies integrated across state, regional and local levels need to be implemented.

### **Aerobic Fitness Thresholds Associated with Fifth Grade Academic Achievement**

**Richard Wittberg, Lesley A. Cottrell, Catherine L. Davis, and Karen L. Northrup**

**Background:** Whereas effects of physical fitness and physical activity on cognitive function have been documented, little is known about how they are related. **Purpose:** This study assessed student aerobic fitness measured by FITNESSGRAM Mile times and/or Pacer circuits and whether the nature of the association between aerobic fitness and standardized academic performance is dose-response or threshold related. **Methods:** Standardized academic test scores and aerobic capacity scores were collected from two cohorts of 5th grade students over two years. The Mile run and Pacer circuits results were compared to patterns in students' academic test scores. **Results:** Sectioning of Mile times and Pacer circuits revealed a sharp peak in academic performance for boys who completed the Mile in 9 minutes or less. Girls' Pacer revealed peaks in academic performance at 12 and 30 circuits. **Discussion:** Results demonstrate that select achievements in the Mile or Pacer account for significant increases in academic performance on standardized tests. **Translation to Health Education Practice:** This study identifies aerobic fitness points which, if achieved, offer the greatest probability of increased academic success in fifth graders. Physical education, cross-curricular thematic units, and club activities can be portals of opportunity to increase moderate to vigorous physical activity and fitness in students. Furthermore, school-based physical activity and fitness opportunities may positively impact health risk factors associated with childhood obesity. Policies that increase aerobic activity opportunities in the school setting may increase overall academic performance, encourage positive health habits and improve immediate and future overall health.

### **Connecting Children and Family with Nature-Based Physical Activity**

**M. Ryan Flett, Rebecca W. Moore, Karin A. Pfeiffer, Joyce Belonga, and Julie Navarre**

**Background:** As the obesity epidemic expands to include younger Americans, there is greater need to understand youth experiences and to identify innovative strategies to promote physical activity in children and adolescents. Connecting children and families with nature-based activities is an example of a strategy that may promote physical activity and other aspects of health and well-being in children and youth. **Purpose:** It is important to determine which aspects of activity in nature youth (and families) find most and least appealing, as well as characteristics of an ideal program. This study is intended to provide a needs assessment and recommended design for a community outreach program. **Methods:** Six focus groups were conducted with parents and youth in rural Michigan. Thirty-eight of the 42 participants were female. **Results:** Content analysis generated three major results: (1) Youth enjoy nature, but could be more active and engaged; (2) Adults appreciate restorative aspects of nature; youth prefer competitive and challenging experiences; and (3) Programs should promote, educate, train and create opportunities for youth to engage in healthy lifelong activities. **Discussion:** Participants

showed interest in outdoor activity, but activities must be provided that are compelling and that address the barriers preventing populations from being more active. Translation to Health Education Practice: More effective programs must have clear objectives, build the confidence of participants, be challenging, and above all, fun. Ideal programs should offer both physical activity and ecologically meaningful nature experiences.

### **Current Status and Future Plans for Undergraduate Public/Community Health Education Program Accreditation**

**M. Elizabeth Miller, David A. Birch, and Randall R. Cottrell**

Background: Quality assurance in health education professional preparation has long been a goal of the profession. A comprehensive coordinated accreditation process for graduate and undergraduate health education has been recommended. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the current status of, and future plans for, accreditation/approval of professional preparation programs in community health education. Methods: A web-based survey was sent to 93 programs chairs or coordinators listed in American Association for Health Education (AAHE) Program Directory of Institutes offering Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Programs in Health Education. Results: Fifty-eight programs responded yielding a 62% response rate. Sixty-two percent (n=33) of programs noted they would seek accreditation when CEPH accreditation of free-standing undergraduate programs becomes available. Seventy-nine percent (n=45) reported their administration was highly supportive or somewhat supportive of accreditation. Discussion: Results indicate that universities surveyed were supportive of accreditation and that professional preparation programs will move to obtain accreditation at the undergraduate level when available. Translation to Health Education Practice: Accessible education and technical assistance programs should be implemented to facilitate accreditation initiatives.

### **Putting Health Education on the Public Health Map in Canada—The Role of Higher Education**

**Sandra Vamos and Julia Hayos**

The health education profession has developed over recent years garnering national and international attention. Canada's evolving health education perspective emphasizing the concept of health literacy within the broader public health system reflects the need for trained, competent and skilled health educators designing, implementing and evaluating health-related programs. Higher education can play an important role in moving forward the health education process bridging research and practice. Capacity building in the health education and promotion workforce requires engagement from university systems, their collaborators, and participating students interested in improving the health of individuals, communities, and nations. This article provides: (1) illustration for the need for health education in higher education to move the practice of public health forward in Canada, (2) rationale for embedding greater emphasis on the health education perspective and process within Canadian academe, and (3) responses for future directions throughout health education practice for health educators entering the public health workforce in Canada and beyond.