

November/December 2003

Promoting Adolescent and School Health: Perspectives and Future Directions

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This address was the 2003 AAHE Scholar Presentation delivered at the annual meeting of the American Association for Health Education, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Philadelphia, PA, on April 4, 2003.

A “Fat” Tax: Knowledge and Attitudes of Snack Food Taxing Among College Students

Shari McMahan, Jeffrey Hampl, and Yosuke Chikamoto

The economic cost for the United States from heart disease, diabetes, and cancer is estimated at \$71 billion annually. Along with this trend, the prevalence of obesity in the United States has reached epidemic proportions. To date, all interventions related to the prevention and treatment of obesity have failed. We must find a new way to prevent this epidemic from spreading. How then can we best encourage people to make lower-fat, more appropriate food choices? What if a tax was applied to unhealthy, fat-laden foods? Among those most affected by such a policy are college-age students. First, this age range (18-29) is at increased risk for obesity, and second, they spend an extraordinary amount of money on convenience food. The purpose of this study was to identify college student’s knowledge and attitudes on policies regarding sales tax on snack-related food items. Surveys were administered in a variety of general education courses at two Western universities. Six-hundred sixty surveys were completed. Results indicated that many students (71.5%) were not aware of a snack food tax. About one-half (47.3%) felt that they would support such a tax especially if the tax was minimal (e.g., 1 cent).

The Association of Body Mass Index, Perceived Body Mass Index, and Predictors of Eating Disorders Among a Sample of College Students

Timothy J. Bungum and Stacy Lofton

Rates of eating disorders have increased recently and are a public health concern especially among college students. Understanding variables that are associated with eating disorders could be helpful in preventing them. Participants (N=525) were students from a large southwestern university. It was hypothesized that a desire for an underweight body mass index (BMI) would be predicted by one’s ability to accurately identify one’s current BMI while controlling for variables previously shown to be associated with eating behaviors, which included body dissatisfaction; drive for thinness; social physique anxiety; bulimia tendencies; dietary restraint; age; race; Greek membership; and gender were included in the regression model. Women scored higher than men on measures of social physique anxiety, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and dietary restraint, although more than twice the proportion of men (49%) as compared with women (22%) were overweight or obese. Women were more accurate in correctly identifying their own BMI category. However, incorrectly identifying one’s BMI was the only significant predictor of desiring an underweight BMI among women. No independent variables predicted the desire for an underweight BMI among men. Future research should assess the preventive and predictive power of accurately assessing one’s BMI with eating behaviors.

Influences on Body Image and Disordered Eating Among Secondary School Students

William Thatcher and Deborah Rhea

This study examined whether behavioral differences (exercise, dieting, changing eating habits, taking pills, or vomiting/taking laxatives to lose weight) exist when identifying the major influencing factors (media, family, friends, teacher/coach, and doctor/nurse) among Black and White men's and women's self perceptions of body weight. Respondents (N=3,957) to the 1999 South Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey were examined on six questions pertaining to body image influences and behavioral activities to manipulate body weight and/or body image. Chi-square and logistic regression analysis were used to show associations among the chosen variables. Body mass index scores for participants were generated and compared with concerns about weight. More than 40% of participants were concerned about their weight and participated in deleterious behaviors to manipulate their weight and self-perception of body. Mass media and family were the most influential factors in participant's self-perception of body. Exercise and dieting were the most prevalent ways to manipulate body weight. Significant differences were determined for each race and gender group with regard to types of activities intended to manipulate their body weight. Policy changes to media advertisements and innovative interventions should be developed that can influence adolescents to choose a healthy body size and to be comfortable with the varieties of body shapes.

Viewpoints on Accreditation from Health Education Professionals and Administrators of Academic Professional Preparation Programs

Jay M. Bernhardt, Donna M. Videto, Christine L. Widdall, W. William Chen, Collins Airhihenbuwa, and John P. Allegrante

The health education profession has made significant strides in promoting quality assurance for credentialing of health educators through a combination of individual certification and program approval and accreditation mechanisms. Although the profession has widely embraced individual certification, program accreditation has not been uniformly accepted or implemented. The National Task Force on Accreditation in Health Education was charged to develop a detailed plan for a coordinated accreditation system for undergraduate and graduate programs in health education. One of the goals of the task force was to gather professionwide input into any proposed new system. We conducted two Web-based surveys to assess viewpoints on accreditation and program approval from health education professionals (n=506) and from faculty and administrators at academic programs in health education (n=105). Results from the surveys show that the majority of professionals in the field and at academic programs surveyed supported and would participate in a national, coordinated, professionwide accreditation system in health education. Furthermore, the majority of respondents suggested that the accreditation system should be comprehensive, flexible, build on the strengths of existing accreditation systems, and be linked to individual certification. Findings from these surveys, along with other input from the field, will help inform the final recommendations of the task force.

Creating a Research Agenda for Department Chairs

David A. Birch

Limited research exists related to departmental administration of health education professional preparation programs. Initiating and maintaining a research agenda that addresses administrative issues is a possible area of scholarship for department chairs. In this article a rationale is presented for the involvement of department chairs in such research along with suggestions for specific research topics and ideas for actions to support the development of a research agenda.