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Access to Healthy Foods Across America

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Access To Healthy Foods Across America

Andrea Bashore, Heather Evankow, Jacob Farran, Jesse Hickey, Aaron LePoire

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Background

An unhealthy food environment is one of the leading causes of obesity in the United States. Access to healthy foods becomes one of the most important aspects for avoiding all of the disease states associated with excess weight. Some of the major health consequences of obesity include cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, stroke, high cholesterol, osteoarthritis, and some cancers. Children can also be affected adversely by being overweight or obese by being prone to high blood pressure, early symptoms of hardening of the arteries, type 2 diabetes, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. These health conditions may be accelerated or exacerbated later in life due to childhood overweight and obesity. It is of utmost importance that adults and children alike have access to a healthy food environment. People who have better access to healthy foods have also been shown to eat healthier. Area household income can have a large impact on access to healthy food choices. Income levels have been shown to affect access to healthy foods in local areas, but no study has shown if this is prevalent across the United States.

Significance of the Problem

- Price of low quality food versus healthy alternatives
- Lower income areas have higher priced healthy food choices
- Quality of fresh produce
- Higher income areas have more traditional grocery stores
- Lower income areas have more convenience stores
- Poor quality food has a longer shelf-life
- Inconvenient store hours
- Transportation to grocery stores
- Distance to grocery stores

PROPOSED METHODS

Study Design

- Cross-sectional study designed to compare access to healthy foods across the United States of America.

Sample

- This study will comprise approximately 380 grocery stores with 190 from high income and 190 from low income.

Data Collection

- Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEM-S)
- Eligible participants recruited from LinkedIn
- Qualtrics Online Survey that is mobile friendly, scanned and emailed, or filled out by hand and mailed
- Data entered on SPSS

Measurement

- The Nutrition Environment Measures Survey was used to measure and evaluate food availability and quality in grocery stores

OBJECTIVES

To determine if the socioeconomic level of counties affect access to healthier food options across the United States.

PROPOSED ANALYSES

Quantitative

- SPSS software
- Compare high income areas to low income areas based on NEM-S scores

HYPOTHESES

H_0 : The socioeconomic level of counties does not affect access to healthier food options across the United States.

H_A : The socioeconomic level of counties affects access to healthier food options across the United States.

PROJECT TIMELINE

December 2013
Recruitment Begins

Fall 2014
Data Collection
Ends

Winter 2014
Analyses and
Conclusions
Completed

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LIMITATIONS

- Limited application of the instrument Nutrition Environment Measures Survey in stores (NEM-S)
- Unknown effectiveness of using social media to recruit researchers

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The goal of this study is to provide a framework for further public health studies of similar nature.