The Prevention Research Collaboration has produced an evaluation report on the impact of the Measure-Up campaign on NSW residents. The evaluation was based on a telephone survey conducted by NSW Health, both before and after the campaign, of 1,000 people aged 18 to 65 years. The analysis found that most people (89%) recognised the campaign when prompted.

Knowledge of recommended waist circumference thresholds to reduce disease risk increased significantly for both men (<1% to 9.8%) and women (19.4% to 36.5%), pre-to post-campaign. However, the proportion of those who reported a waist circumference above the recommended threshold, and who reported satisfaction with their current waist size, remained stable.

Those who measured their waist circumference as a result of the campaign had a higher level of education and were more likely to:
- perceive themselves as overweight,
- agree the campaign communicated the link between waist size and chronic disease, and
- rate maintaining a healthy waist size as important.

In summary, our evaluation among this NSW resident population indicates the Measure-Up campaign successfully increased awareness of the link between waist circumference and risk of chronic disease.

The results of our analysis were presented by the PRC’s Anne Grunseit at the Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society’s Annual Conference in October 2010, and won the prize for Best Public Health paper.
FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our first issue for 2011.

In this issue, we celebrate the completion of the 2010 Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS 2010) by reporting some of its key findings (page 3).

On page 4 we present the latest evidence on breastfeeding, which is being used to guide the update of the NSW Breastfeeding Policy.

We also gain some key insights into the case for kilojoule labelling in quick service restaurants (page 5).

The PRC would like to welcome Professor Chris Rissel and Dr Rachel Laws. Meet them on page 8.

I’d like to send a warm thank you to the PRC editorial team: Lesley King, Rona Macniven, Patricia Gleeson and Belinda van Hofe, for their support and contributions to this edition.


As always, we welcome any feedback on our newsletter. You can contact us at sph.panorg@sydney.edu.au

Wishing all readers the best for 2011.

RECENT PRC PUBLICATIONS


In Term 1 of 2010, PANORG undertook a survey of over 8,000 primary and high school students from 101 schools which participated in the NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS 2010). NSW is the only Australian state/territory to have representative survey data on school aged children across four time points (i.e. 1985, 1997, 2004, 2010). Funded by the NSW Department of Health, SPANS 2010 serves as a vehicle to monitor progress towards the priorities and targets of the NSW Government’s State Plan and State Health Plan. The State Plan identified that the prevention of overweight and obesity was a major State priority and set the target that the NSW Government should aim to ‘reduce the percentage of children who are overweight and obese to 25% by 2010, and to 22% by 2016.’

This information may be used to guide policies and interventions, which promote healthy weight and lifestyles among young people, and to monitor the overall impact of recent interventions and policies.

**SUMMARY OF SELECTED FINDINGS FROM SPANS 2010**

- 22.8% of students were overweight or obese
- 70% of students were in the healthy weight range; 7.9% of students were underweight, 17.1% were overweight and 5.8% obese
- Less than half of Years K, 2 and 4 students met the Australian physical activity guideline
- Less than two thirds (63%) of Years 6, 8 and 10 students met the Australian physical activity guideline during summer school terms, and only half (51%) met the guideline during winter school terms
- Boys were more proficient at object-control and locomotor skills required for sport (i.e. run, vertical jump); while girls were more proficient at the leap and side gallop (locomotor skills for dance and gymnastics)
- Two thirds of students were classified as adequately fit
- Screen-time (e.g. watching TV, playing video games) was the most common sedentary activity for all ages
- More than 50% of students exceeded screen-time guidelines on weekdays and more than 80% exceeded these guidelines on weekends
- 25% of students in Years K, 2 and 4 had a TV in their bedroom
- About 60% of students met the recommended daily intake for fruit, while only 30% met the recommendation for vegetables
- Almost 15% of students drank one or more cups of soft drink per day
- A third of students ate confectionery three or more times a week


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1 1985 Australian Fitness Survey; 1997 NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey; 2004 NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS 2004); 2010 NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS 2010)
PROMOTING, PROTECTING AND SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING IN NSW: WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

The PRC has again been active in supporting evidence-based policy in the area of breastfeeding.

In 2006, research evidence summarised by PRC staff underpinned the development of the NSW Breastfeeding Policy Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in NSW (PD2006_012). However, recent national policy, The Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010–2015, has spurred a review of the state-wide policy by NSW Health; hence, a review of the evidence was required.

In their rapid review of the evidence to support the policy update, Deb Hector and colleagues highlighted the substantial protective short-term and longer-term health effects of breastfeeding, including detrimental effects of formula-feeding among infants and mothers. They identified specific groups of women for which targeted breastfeeding support is likely to be required. For example, young mothers and those without tertiary qualifications are more likely to not breastfeed or cease breastfeeding early. Other mothers who have poorer breastfeeding practices are those who are obese, smoke, have a caesarean birth, are first-time mothers, have multiple births, or have pre-term or low birth-weight infants.

The authors also identified evidence-based areas for intervention, including the implementation of the Baby Friendly Health Initiative, across hospital, paediatric and community health settings; training of relevant health professionals to enable them to provide consistent advice to mothers; providing professional and peer support to enable mothers to overcome breastfeeding difficulties; and peer counselling and social support for young and disadvantaged mothers. This research evidence is currently being incorporated into the policy revision.

References


MEASURING FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

PANORG has recently developed practical tools for measuring food availability in community food environments, and for assessing the availability of indicator food items in different types of food retail outlets. Food environments have multiple aspects: the Community Food Environment describes the geographical location of food outlets, while the Consumer Food Environment describes what foods consumers can buy within these food outlets.

A pilot project, using these measures to map food availability in three rural towns in NSW, is currently underway by a PRC team, in collaboration with (the former) Greater Southern Area Health Service. Geographic analysis of data (obtained by direct observation) has been conducted using the Sydney South West Area Health Service Epidemiology Unit’s specialised GIS software. This has enabled us to map the diversity, proximity and variety of different types of food outlets in these towns, including supermarkets, fast food outlets, restaurants or cafés and bakeries.

The availability of foods within these different food outlets was examined using checklists, which assessed the availability of selected core and non-core indicator foods. Healthy or ‘core’ indicator foods included fruit and vegetables, low fat dairy products and lean meats and alternatives; whilst unhealthy or ‘non-core’ indicator foods comprised energy dense, nutrient poor foods such as soft drinks, potato crisps and confectionery.

Once completed, a full report on this research will be provided to the Greater Southern Area Health Service, as well as to local councils in the participating towns.
ADVERTISING THE NSW GET HEALTHY INFORMATION AND COACHING SERVICE®

The Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service (GHS), funded by NSW Health, is a free telephone service available to NSW residents to assist adults in being more active, eating healthier and achieving a healthy weight. As part of introducing the GHS, a mass media campaign consisting mainly of television advertising was launched in March 2009 to promote the service. The number of phone calls and website visits to the GHS were monitored during the first nine months after its launch. Using results from these data, Blythe O’Hara, a PhD candidate with the PRC and Manager of Strategic Projects at the Centre for Health Advancement, NSW Health, led a study examining the most effective pattern of advertising for generating public awareness and interest in using the GHS.

Blythe, along with her co-researchers at the PRC, found a dose-response relationship between paid advertising and NSW residents contacting the GHS. The 30-second GHS advertisement was significantly more effective than the 15-second advertisement at generating contacts. The length of time viewers were exposed to the GHS contact details also made a difference. The researchers concluded that on-going marketing is essential to achieve population-wide engagement with the service.

For more information on the Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service visit http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au/
For more information on the evaluation, contact Blythe O’Hara blythe.ohara@sydney.edu.au

WOULD YOU LIKE KILOJOULES WITH THAT?

Standard food outlets in NSW have until February 2012 to introduce kilojoule labels on their menus. In November 2010, the NSW government amended the Food Act 2003 with the Food Amendment Act 2010, which came into effect in February 2011. It requires all ‘standard food outlets’ to include kilojoule labelling on their menu boards, accompanied by the statement: ‘The average adult daily energy intake is 8,700 kJ’.

Standard food outlets are those with 20 or more locations in NSW (or 50 or more locations nationally) that sell standard food items, and include major fast food, bakery, coffee and doughnut chains.

But what effect will kilojoule labelling have on consumer purchases from these outlets?

To date, most efficacy studies on this topic have come from the United States, where menu labelling policies have been introduced since 2003. Most studies have found a decrease in the number of calories purchased, with 15-200 fewer calories per order/transaction (one calorie being equivalent to 4.2 kilojoules). However, the impact of calorie labelling is likely to differ by type of restaurant. For example, calorie labelling in Starbucks coffee stores in New York City resulted in customers being less likely to purchase food with their coffee, rather than choosing foods lower in calories.

It will be important to have an independent body to monitor and evaluate the impact of the menu labelling

Professor Ian Caterson, a PRC director, has been invited to join the Fast Choices Labelling Reference Group which has been convened by the NSW Food Authority in 2011. The NSW Government has committed $1.5 million to fund an evaluation and education campaign as part of introducing this policy.

References


National Heart Foundation of Australia, Rapid review of the evidence: The need for nutrition labelling on menus. 2010

How we see images of cycling and how cycling is represented in mainstream newspapers are both important because they can facilitate, or act as a barrier to, cycling behaviour, as well as policy makers’ decisions regarding funding for cycling infrastructure.

Professor Chris Rissel and colleagues from the former Sydney South West AHS qualitatively analysed images and perceptions of cycling among seventy adults from inner Sydney, who were either regular, occasional or non-riders. A focus on the activity of cycling, versus the actions of cyclists was an important distinction to emerge. Themes linked to the activity of cycling included: ‘clean and green’, ‘healthy and fun’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘serious business’, whilst themes linked to actions of cyclists included: ‘risk takers and law breakers’ and ‘status and sub-cultures’.

Discussion centred on the low social status of riding over other transport modes, the relative acceptability of different riding sub-cultures, the ‘green’ image of cycling transport and the status associated with the riders’ clothing and bicycle choice. For example, specialised lycra cycling clothing and its ‘serious and sporty’ connotation, was a negative influence for non-riders. While ‘cycling’ was generally viewed as a positive, environmentally friendly activity, the actions of some ‘cyclists’ were disliked, and this influenced views about cycling, particularly among non-riders.

Non-riders perceived cyclists who rode for sport or commuting as rule breakers and risk takers. However, regular riders felt unfairly judged by this stereotype. There is a need to improve public acceptability of cycling, as well as change social norms so that cycling is seen as an everyday activity that can be undertaken by almost anyone, without the need for special clothing, expensive equipment or limited purpose-built facilities.

A second study by Chris and his team found that there has been an increase in the reporting of cycling in major Sydney and Melbourne newspapers (from 106 stories in 1998/99 to 169 in 2007/08). Positive framing of ‘cycling’, such as the health or environmental benefits, was more widespread than negative framing; whereas framing of ‘cyclists’ such as the injury or death of a cyclist, was more negative than positive framing.

Overall, news coverage appears to reflect developments in the different cities, with increases in positive reporting of cycling observed in Melbourne, following increases in cycling in that city. Real physical or political improvements to the cycling environment may be necessary before coverage becomes more positive.

References:

Daley M, Rissel C. Perspectives and images of cycling as a barrier or facilitator of cycling. Transport Policy 2010; 18: 211-216.

JIMMIE LOUIE, PHD CANDIDATE

Thesis title: The effects of two different diets on the pregnancy outcomes of women with gestational diabetes mellitus – a randomized controlled trial

Jimmy’s PhD project is based on a randomized controlled trial (RCT) among women diagnosed with Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM), which he undertook with Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Tania Markovic as his supervisors. His hypothesis for the RCT was that a low Glycaemic Index (GI) diet would reduce the risk of the women’s unborn child growing larger than normal for their gestational age (or ≥ 90th birth weight percentile).

The pregnant women with GDM in this study were selected randomly, to follow either a low GI or a wholegrain high fibre diet, while they continued to receive their antenatal care as usual. The study measured both their baby’s birth weight and the metabolic parameters of the mothers, such as fasting insulin level and Total and LDL cholesterol.

The results of Jimmy’s studies found that a low GI diet produced pregnancy outcomes comparable with a wholegrain high fibre diet, without any adverse effect.

A larger scale study, starting at an earlier stage of pregnancy, is currently being planned.

HUGH CATERSON, MPHIL CANDIDATE

Hugh’s thesis aimed to assess the validity of several different self-report instruments used for measuring physical activity and diet.

Participants were recruited from both the NSW Get Healthy Service and the Sydney Diabetes Prevention Program. These participants completed three day food diaries, seven day accelerometer recordings and had height and weight measured in-person. When comparing the results of these measurements to their usual baseline interviews, high levels of validity were found for the Active Australia Survey, and promising signs of validity for the Physical Activity Scale for the Elderly and the Fat and Fibre Behaviour Questionnaire.

Hugh submitted his thesis in March this year and has commenced studies in the Graduate Medical Program at the University of Sydney. Hopefully, he will still be seen around the PRC working on odds and ends. In his spare time, Hugh likes to play rugby union and dream about travelling overseas. He would like to thank all members of the PRC for their time and support over the past two years.
MEET AND GREET PROFESSOR CHRIS RISSEL

In February, Chris officially joined the PRC after years of collaborating with many of the PRC staff on a variety of projects through his former role as Director of the Health Promotion Service in the (former) Sydney South West Area Health Service and Clinical Associate Professor. He has worked extensively in health promotion in NSW, as well as in Minnesota (USA) and Germany.

His main research interests focus on obesity prevention and active travel, particularly cycling advocacy. He is one of the authors of the national report Cycling: Getting Australia Moving - Barriers, facilitators and interventions to get more Australians physically active through cycling. He has recently completed a three-year project to promote the increased use of cyclepaths in south-west Sydney – Cycling Connecting Communities, and is currently involved in an ARC grant looking at Safer Cycling.

Other research interests include tobacco control and sexual health. Chris was a Chief Investigator in the first large scale national sexual health survey- the Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR), and has just received NHMRC funding to repeat this survey ten years later (ASHR2).

Chris cycles to work, but has to take the long way around because the new commute is too short.

MEET AND GREET DR RACHEL LAWS

After completing a Masters in Nutrition and Dietetics at Wollongong University, Rachel started her career working at the Fairfield Division of General Practice. This was followed by a ‘short’ working holiday to Europe, which turned into a five year adventure. While living in Bath, England, Rachel worked on the UK Counterweight Programme, a national multi-centre obesity initiative aimed at developing and implementing a sustainable approach to weight management for adults in general practice. As well as using her clinical dietetic skills during this time, she developed a strong interest in research and public health.

Upon returning to Australia, Rachel worked in SESIAHS Health Promotion, prior to moving to the UNSW Research Centre for Primary Health Care & Equity. At UNSW, Rachel managed a program of research examining the feasibility and effectiveness of addressing lifestyle risk factors in Community Health Services (also the subject of her recently completed PhD).

In her spare time, Rachel is busy running around after baby Travis (12 months), and enjoys swimming and hiking (especially in far flung corners of the world).