BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term effects on health by increasing risk for:
- Sleep apnea
- Pre-diabetes
- Type II diabetes
- Hypertension
- Asthma
- Adult obesity
- Weight related bullying
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Increase school absenteeism

Hispanic’s dietary habits are influence by:
- Culture and personal values
- Family members
- Economics and access to healthy foods

The Illinois General Assembly’s Obesity Prevention initiative reports:
- 20% of all Illinois children are obese
- 33% of Hispanic children living in Illinois are obese

PURPOSE

The purpose of this pilot study was to identify how environment, behaviors and beliefs impact dietary habits of Hispanic mothers in Winnebago County. Data will be used to develop an obesity prevention intervention.

The aim of this study was to explore:
- What do Hispanic mothers in Winnebago County know about the USDA dietary guidelines?
- What factors influences Hispanic mothers’ dietary habits?
- What effect does living in Midwest have on the eating patterns of Hispanic families?

METHOD

- 11 Hispanic mothers were recruited from a local Winnebago church using stratified purposeful sampling
- Data was collected using a structured interview guide
- Interview notes were analyzed using the grounded theory method

RESULTS

Analysis of the interviews identified three themes that influenced dietary habits as follows:

- Structural barriers
- Family dynamics
- Changing cultural patterns

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<th>Theme</th>
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| Structural barriers    | “One of the challenges to cooking at home is time and energy consuming.”
“cook for my husband but the challenge of cooking at home is my work schedule so either my husband or I cook”
“The biggest barrier in eating healthy is money. Eating healthy is expensive”.
“usually my husband cooks 5 days a week”.
“My grandparents cooked Mexican spicy foods like fried food, meat, tortillas, pork, green chile. Corn oil was mainly used”.
“My children favorite food is spaghetti, chicken nuggets, chicken patties, and frozen food. The kids eat their favorite food 2-3 times a week”.
“My child likes to eat pasta mostly spaghetti and eats it once a week”.
“We enjoy pizza and eat out at a pizzeria every 2-3 weeks.”
“Our favorite restaurant is Portillos and we usually eat there Friday, Saturdays or Sundays”.
| Time management was identified as a key factor in the nutritional decision-making process with mothers balancing working full time with meal preparation.
Cost of the food is a continuous problem and the cost issues has to be addressed in order for individuals to eat healthy.
Fathers are becoming involved in decision making and cooking as much as five days a week which is different in Latin America.
Nutrition training has to focus on the father since they are cooking more than the mother.
Length of time in the United States and age of the individual should be considered when working ways to improve healthy eating habits. For instance, with Hispanic grandparents the focus may be on how to cook healthier Hispanic dishes. However, when working with a younger Hispanic population the focus should be on preparing healthy “American” food.
Acculturation, in particular to the adoption of a Midwestern diet has led to cultural dietary changes within the Hispanic population. |

REFERENCES