

Hmong American Food and Health Knowledge in Minnesota

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Abstract:

Food and health issues in Hmong American communities have drawn attention from health researchers and community members. The purpose of this study was to explore how Hmong Americans in Minnesota acquire and articulate their food and health knowledge and to identify barriers in maintaining healthy lifestyles. We conducted five interviews and three focus groups with nine people (ages 17-46) and participated in Hmong family and community gatherings to observe food practices and dialogues about food and health. We found that regardless of Hmong Americans' acculturation and education level, they understand overweight is a health concern and that food and physical activity is related to overweight. Acquisition of knowledge comes from informal and formal sources, including self-observation, family, friends, media, health professionals and school. The barrier to maintaining healthy lifestyles is the social structure that limits access to time, financial resources, healthy foods and physical activities. Our findings challenge the notion that education of disadvantaged communities is the main solution to current health disparities. Recommendations for interventions of behavior changes in Hmong Americans should take into account that this population has a rich repertoire of knowledge about food and health and are aware of the barriers they face to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Keywords:

Hmong American Food and Health Knowledge in Minnesota, Hmong American, Food and Health Knowledge, Minnesota, Education Intervention, Barriers to Maintaining Health Lifestyle, Overweight, Food, Physical Activity, Knowledge