



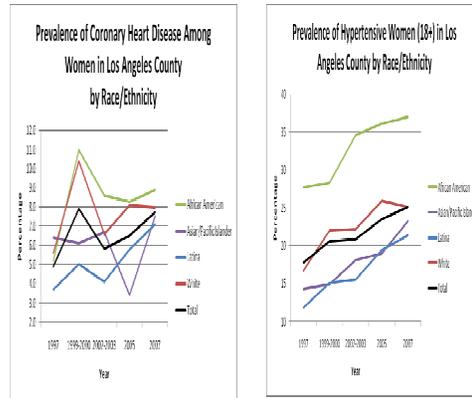
Learning the Barriers that African American Women Face

Jazmyn M. Childress, CSULB/ MPH ©
Preceptor: Eleanor P. Long, MSPH

Abstract

In Los Angeles County, African American (59%) women are disproportionately effected by obesity. Thus over half of these women are overweight or obese. Obesity is usually associated with other health issues, specifically: diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems and adverse birth outcomes. In addition, their children and families are more likely to become obese.

Background on Data

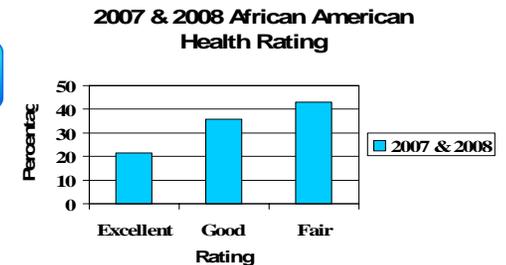


Findings

The typical African American woman between 23 and 33 interviewed stated:

Barriers to Healthy Eating

- Fast Food cheap & readily available
- Access and cost of quality foods
- Based food choices on what their kids wanted to eat
- Lack of time (& skills) to cook



Many African American Women felt:

- Cultural norms
 - overweight accepted & desirable
- Physicians
 - Only listen to African American doctors
- BMI charts
 - Many questioned relevance of BMI charts

Background

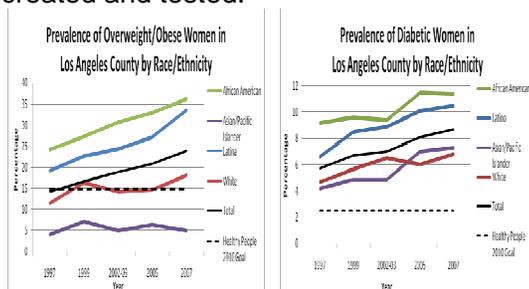
Based on the correlation of obesity to adverse health outcomes, it was imperative to develop messages that would be effective in motivating changes in behavior. This study explored behaviors, attitudes, knowledge and barriers. Through conversations with low-income women, expertise was developed and messages were created and tested.

Objective

The goal was to learn from the women, to understand why obesity exists and how to address the epidemic and prevent obesity in the future.

Study Design

- Qualitative research
- Exploratory focus group approach 2007
- Testing messages 2008
- Supplemental quantitative data collected in post focus group surveys



Barriers to Physical Activity

- Motivation
- Unsafe neighborhood
- Lack Time
- Child care
- Need incentives
- Needed buddy

African American women were dissatisfied with:

- Safety in the neighborhood
- Being overweight
- No access to grocery stores
- Lack of healthy 'fast food'

Summary

The findings indicate the need for behavior change programs. These programs must be appealing and motivational. They must also accommodate women's needs by providing childcare, making fresh foods accessible and affordable, creating safe neighborhoods, providing appropriate incentives and using churches as a way to support women, create exercise support groups and offer cooking classes.

References

Results from Focus Groups and surveys during 2007 and 2008 in Los Angeles County and WIC Centers