Strategies for improving nutrition environment identified: Waupaca Eating Smart pilot

**Description:** The Assessing the Nutrition Environment in Wisconsin Communities project examined the strengths and weaknesses of the nutrition environment along with the link to individual eating habits and weight. It also developed, implemented and evaluated a pilot intervention to promote healthy eating by improving the nutrition environment of restaurants and food stores in Waupaca. The nutrition environment is defined as the access to food as well as the availability, pricing, quality and promotion of food.

**Relevance:** More than two-thirds of adults in the United States are overweight or obese, and research increasingly suggests that the nutrition environment influences what individuals eat. Thus, interventions aimed at restaurants and food stores are important tools for obesity prevention.

**Results:** Researchers used the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey and the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin to develop a statewide surveillance system for identifying strategies to improve the state’s nutrition environment in restaurants and grocery and convenience stores. They also used a social marketing and community-based participatory research approach to develop the Waupaca Eating Smart pilot intervention with local stores and restaurants.

The project team found significant differences in the characteristics of the nutrition environment of various types of stores. Supermarkets and grocery stores generally had better availability and overall scores compared with convenience, gas station and other stores. For restaurants, the researchers found significant differences in the characteristics of the nutrition environment depending on the type of restaurant.

In addition, the project team worked with the Wisconsin Restaurant Association and Wisconsin Grocers Association to develop two toolkits: Check Out Healthy and Order Up Healthy. Research indicated high levels of participation, implementation and maintenance among association members as well as improvement of restaurant nutrition environment scores and a modest improvement in customer attitudes and behaviors for some demographic groups.


**KEY INFORMATION**

**Grantee:** Wisconsin Partnership for Activity & Nutrition (WI PAN), Judy Burrows

**Grant title:** Assessing the Nutrition Environment in Wisconsin Communities

**Academic Partner:** Javier Nieto, MD, MPH, PhD, UW School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Population Health Sciences

**Dates:** January 1, 2010 – September 30, 2013

**Amount:** $403,750 over three years

**Program:** Community-Academic Partnership

**Project ID:** 1621

Check Out Healthy and Order Up Healthy were developed for community members to learn more about the foods and beverages available at stores and restaurants in their local area.