

Grenada School Nutrition Study: Evidence to Inform Policy

The Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP) program supports the generation of new knowledge to help inform policies and programs that are low cost but can have a high impact on reducing the non-communicable disease (NCD) burden and improving overall population health in low- and middle-income countries. NCDP funds research focusing on the main risk factors for NCDs: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, alcohol misuse, and physical inactivity.

The challenge

The World Health Organization's Global Burden of Disease study predicts that non-communicable diseases associated with obesity will represent the greatest disease burden in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) by 2030. Given this projection and the limited success of high income countries in addressing obesity, the lesson for LMICs is now the time to prevent obesity-promoting environments from being established in the first place.

The proposed project focuses on adolescence as the critical period associated with establishing an obesogenic lifestyle (i.e. a lifestyle that causes obesity). In Grenada, overweight and obesity rates among adolescents are relatively low but in recent years the proportions have dramatically increased. This is likely due to changes in modifiable environmental factors that can result in obesogenic diets, lack of physical activity, and tobacco use. It is therefore important to target these environmental factors, before it is too late.

The research

The goal of this project is to find ways to decrease the likelihood that Grenadian adolescents will adopt an obesogenic lifestyle. The project will identify the modifiable factors in secondary schools and neighborhood environments that are associated with different rates of overweight and obesity among adolescents in Grenada, with the overall aim to influence policies to improve these environments.

Through interviews with adolescents and policy-makers, the researchers will identify habits and environmental factors associated with obesogenic lifestyles. Discussion with policy-makers will also help to identify the dietary and

physical activity-related policies that are relevant for addressing the obesity challenge in Grenada, as well as the barriers to their adoption and implementation.

Through questionnaires, the team will directly assess Grenadian high school students' physical activity, eating habits, and sedentary behaviors. They will also obtain self-reported measures of their dietary and physical activity.

Expected results

This project aims to:

- produce a Health Report Card to use as an advocacy tool to influence Grenada health policymakers.
- inform the development of policies aimed at addressing the modifiable environmental factors contributing to increase in obesity.

Project duration: July 2012 to July 2015

Funding: CA\$304,000

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The Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP) program is part of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a Canadian Crown Corporation supporting research in developing countries to promote growth and development for more than 40 years.

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