

Active Living Research

Using Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Create Active Communities

ARTICLE SUMMARY

February 2013

Impacts of a Mass Media Campaign on Physical Activity

Introduction

People living in walkable neighborhoods tend to walk more and be more active overall. How do physical activity media campaigns affect people who live in more walkable neighborhoods? We examined impacts of the Western Australian Heart Foundation's Find Thirty every day campaign, comparing the cognitive (e.g. campaign awareness, message comprehension, and message acceptance) and behavioral (e.g. transport and overall walking) effects on residents in more and less walkable neighborhoods.

Key Findings

Overall, the cognitive impacts of the campaign were significant among residents of both types of neighborhoods. However, these effects were greater among people living in more walkable neighborhoods. The campaign also had positive effects on achieving sufficient overall walking and total physical activity but this increase was significant only for total physical activity in residents of less walkable neighborhoods.

Methods

We administered telephone surveys before and after the campaign to adults aged 20 to 54 years living in the metropolitan area of Perth in Western Australia. The survey measured the campaign's cognitive impacts and the frequency and duration of walking and other physical activity. GIS data were used to calculate the walkability of respondents' neighborhoods.

Implications

The campaign had greater cognitive impact on residents of highly walkable neighborhoods, suggesting that the campaign messages may have resonated more with people living in higher density areas characterized by well-connected streets and more destinations to walk to. And the fact that the cognitive effects were not as large among people from less walkable neighborhoods highlights the need for campaign planners to prioritize less walkable neighborhoods and include strategies to help residents overcome environmental barriers to walking and other forms of physical activity.

SOURCE

Barnes, R., et al. (2013). Does Neighbourhood Walkability Moderate the Effects of Mass Media Communication Strategies to Promote Regular Physical Activity? *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 45(1Suppl): S86-S94.

Open access to the full text article is available at:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12160-012-9429-7>

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