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College Students and Low-Carbohydrate Diets

August 9, 2013



A collaborative study including Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management, and Dr. Macaulay Okwuokenye, alumni of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University examine *College Students Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Regarding Low-Carbohydrate Diets*. Poor dietary practices often result in weight gain and increase the potential risk for chronic diseases. As students transition to college, their new found independence and lack of parental supervision provides opportunities to indulge in calorie-rich foods and alcoholic beverages that result in weight gain. In an attempt to combat the weight gain, they resort to strategies they consider “quick-fixes” and one such practice is the adoption of fad diets of which several are popular today. This study focuses on university students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding low carbohydrate diets.

Data were collected through a self-administered survey of 672 students enrolled in Healthful Living courses at a mid-size university in Southeast Georgia. Analysis was performed to generate summary statistics of the sample and to determine factors affecting: (1) avoidance of carbohydrates, (2) purchase of low carbohydrate food products, and (3) participation in diets, with special interest on low carbohydrate diets (i.e., Atkins, South Beach, and Sugar Busters diets). Results of our logistic regression analysis show that factors significantly affecting carbohydrate avoidance include: gender ($p < 0.0001$), race ($p = 0.0155$), BMI ($p < 0.0001$), obtaining nutritional information from books and/or magazines ($p = 0.0106$), and beliefs that: (a) Americans eat more carbohydrates now than in the past ($p = 0.0362$); (b) low carbohydrate foods are more expensive than regular foods ($p = 0.0064$); and (c) a low carbohydrate diet helps to lose weight ($p < 0.0001$).
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