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Georgia Southern Engages Rural Georgians

July 6, 2016



On March 23, 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law. The law became effective on March 23, 2012. The ACA stipulates that non-profit hospitals must demonstrate benefit to their communities through the process of community health needs assessments (CHNAs). Failure to comply with this law may result in loss of non-profit status or large fines. This report describes strategies for engaging rural communities in Internal Revenue Service (IRS)-mandated CHNAs.

Public health practitioners from Georgia Southern University's Jiann Ping Hsu College of Public Health collaborated with 18 rural, non-profit hospitals to complete community-specific CHNAs. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive assessment of the needs and the assets of each of the communities.

The project team assisted 18 rural, non-profit hospitals in assessing the needs of their communities. Technical reports provided to the hospitals described the issues discovered during the assessment. Hospitals were empowered to utilize the information to prioritize community-specific issues and to develop comprehensive plans for implementation.

The CHNA process provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships between public health services and hospitals as well as between hospitals and the communities they serve. Hospitals need to identify and engage diverse sectors of the community in order to comprehensively assess the needs and assets of communities to address the social determinants of health and to reduce health inequities/disparities.

[“Engaging rural Georgians in Internal Revenue Service-mandated community health needs assessments,”](#) was published in the Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association.

Dr. Raymona Lawrence, Assistant Professor of Community Health Behavior and Education at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University (JPHCOPH) is the lead author. Dr. Dziyana Nazaruk and Dr. Stuart Tedders, also from JPHCOPH, are co-authors.

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Georgia Southern Examines Using the Exercise is Medicine® on Campus platform

July 6, 2016



The college setting offers public health educators and exercise scientists a favorable environment to implement wide-spread change in levels of physical activities. With over two-thirds of all adults in the U.S. now categorized as obese or overweight (CDC, 2015), it has become necessary to increase physical activity levels on college campuses. Exercise is Medicine® on Campus (EIM®-OC) is a national initiative to increase physical activity on college campuses by creating an environment to change the subjective norm of diminished exercise movement and fitness among adults. The purpose of the present study was to use the EIM®-OC platform to assess college students' beliefs and practices of physical activity by implementing this program in a rural

setting.

Implementation of EIM®-OC was conducted over a one-week period. More than 1,000 participants joined in the events led by a multi-disciplinary team. Data collected included self-reported daily physical activities, campus commuting, and level of exercise intensity. Descriptive statistics and chi-square reported frequencies and statistical differences.

Overall, the campus turnout for EIM®-OC events was 7.6% higher than national norms. Physical inactivity was statistically different between racial groups ($P=0.04$). Males reported engagement in physical activity primarily for enjoyment and social interactions. Active transport was lower in the rural community than in urban counterparts.

Findings from this study described the successful engagement of a midsized rural campus population in an EIM®-OC campaign. The study revealed self-reported physical activity patterns of students comparable to national averages; however there was a disproportionate number of African Americans who did not participate in any vigorous physical activity.

[“Using the Exercise is Medicine® on Campus platform to assess college students' practice of physical activity in a rural setting,”](#) was published in the Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association.

Dr. Bridget Melton, Associate Professor of Health and Kinesiology at Georgia Southern University was the lead author. Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University's Ms. Jazmin A. Williamson, MPH student, Dr. Helen Bland, professor, and Dr. Jiann Zhang, associate professor were co-authors.

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