

Long term effects of low activity and risky nutrition practices among new Americans from East Africa: Implications for endocrinology and population health planning

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According to the UN Special High Level meeting on global non-communicable diseases, high fat diet, inactivity and substance abuse are risk factors. These exacerbate events for cardio-vascular diseases, lung diseases, hormonal deficiencies, obesity and cancer. Medical check-ups make it possible for earlier diagnosis of CV risk factors. Physical exercises help reduce CV risks. Early, timely and regular medical check-ups, active lifestyle, moderate use of alcohol and non-smoking help in timely diagnosis and management of metabolic-syndromes. This study sought to gauge these levels of activity, risk-factors and attendances for medical check-ups among Ugandan-Americans. By Ugandan-Americans is meant, that community of Ugandan extract that has stayed in USA for over 6 months to 20 years. Using key informant interview and observation guides, 3 categories of Ugandans in America were followed for 7 months from August 2012- Feb 2013. The breakdown is as follows: 70 were above 50 (32 females: 38 males); 100 were between 30-40 years (52 females: 48 males) and; 20 who were between 15-22 years (15 males: 5 females). The states visited were Illinois, Massachusetts, California and Texas. In the past 12 months, 30 (thirty) respondents had gone once for a medical check-up: 12 were above 50 years; 7 were between 30-40 years; 10 were between 15-22 years. 22 (22-30 years) had accessed ante/post-natal services. 12 (3 males: 9 females) chronic care and for anti-hypertensive medications. 2 males (19 & 23 years) accessed cancer treatment services regularly. 22 (2 were above 50 years and 20 were below 36 years) had engaged in a regularized physical fitness activity. 65 continued taking OTC pain relievers. All 190 had attended a Ugandan-led social gathering. 12 deaths related to end-stage heart disease and 2 from sickle-cell-anemia were noted.

“I do play soccer and am on the school soccer team. We are 4 children and our parents have bought membership for us at the local YWCA. My father and mother are members too but they never come to exercise. I do attend social gatherings organized by Ugandan-Americans.” [Key Informant, 15 year old teenager.]

Conclusion: Peer networks are platforms for mobilization for population health services among Ugandan-Americans.

Biography

Tom Rogers Muyunga Mukasa is a student at Harvard University. He came to United States as an asylum seeker from Uganda. He has over 20 years' experience working with health service provision. He has mobilized African communities to organize as safety-nets against chronic illnesses. He is a member of the Africa AIDS Society.

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