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Engaging rural appalachia teens to reduce daily consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages: A community-based participatory research project

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Background: Sugar sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugar in the U. S. diet. Currently, the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is estimated to add 224 kcal/day or 11% of total daily calories. On a typical day, 80% of youth consume sugar-sweetened beverages. The highest consumers are adolescents aged 12-19 years old, attributing to 13% of their total daily caloric intake. Children and teens in U. S. Appalachia have high consumption rates compared to others their same age. High consumption of sugar sweetened beverages has been associated with obesity, diabetes, elevated triglycerides, cardiovascular disease, and dental caries.

Objectives: To engage rural Appalachia in health initiatives, a community-based participatory research project was undertaken.

Methods: Essential information and input from the community residents was obtained via health surveys and focus group sessions. A pilot study was developed aimed at impacting teens' sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. The intervention study consisted of the creation of a Teen Advisory Council to design the intervention: a "Sodabrity" 30-Day Challenge at a local school. A pre-test-posttest design was used. The Council: (a) designed a social marketing campaign, (b) supported participants during the Challenge; and (c) worked with school officials to change environmental factors such as vending machine options.

Results: Significant reduction in SSB consumption and significant increase in water consumption immediately post-intervention and 30 days post intervention. Significant increase in teens abstaining from SSB consumption for 30 days.

Conclusion: CBPR to addressing SSB consumption can have a sustainable and meaningful impact on adolescent health behaviors, specifically targeting lifestyle behaviors.