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Knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward salt consumption among young adults in Astana, Kazakhstan

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Statement of the Problem: Excessive salt intake has been associated with various health outcomes, including high blood pressure. In Kazakhstan, a post-soviet country in Central Asia, salt intake levels are estimated to be high, while cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are a major cause of morbimortality. A culturally-relevant public health intervention aimed at decreasing levels of salt consumed may be a simple and affordable means of lowering CVD-related burden in the country. Prior to undertaking actions, a study is needed to understand what the people in the region know and feel about salt intake and its association with health. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation, A cross-sectional online survey on salt-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices was conducted among young (18-30) residents of Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan. Bivariate tests of association were used for analysis. Findings, Of the 237 participants, 95% knew that high levels of consuming salt could deteriorate health; however, only around 60% believed that hypertension could be such an outcome. Specifically, older participants were more likely to correctly identify the association than younger ones ($p=0.007$), yet no difference was observed among education levels ($p=0.203$). Although almost 70% thought that overall per-capita salt consumption rate in Kazakhstan was higher than recommended, less than 30% assessed their own level as such. No significant differences in knowledge of the recommended amount, concerns about amount of salt in food or behavior to reduce salt consumption (except for avoiding fast food, being more prevalent in the older group, $p=0.002$) were observed between the genders or among the different age and region groups. Conclusion & Significance, Young residents of Astana seem to lack knowledge about safe salt practices and association of salt with hypertension as well as deny one's own salt consumption level being high. An appropriate educational intervention could target these issues.

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