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Community-based restaurant interventions to promote healthy eating: A systematic review

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Restaurants are practical settings for healthy eating interventions because eating away from home is common, associated with higher caloric intake, and can contribute to weight gain. This review summarizes and evaluates the evidence supporting community-based restaurant interventions. We searched peer-reviewed articles through January 2014 for original research describing community-based restaurant interventions to promote healthy eating. We extracted summary information and classified the interventions into 9 categories according to the strategies implemented. We adapted a scoring system to evaluate the evidence, assigning 0 to 3 points to each intervention for study design, customer awareness, and effectiveness. The average values were summed and then multiplied by 1 to 3 points, according to the volume of research available for each category. These summary scores were used to designate each category as having an insufficient, sufficient, or strong level of evidence. We reviewed 27 interventions described in 25 studies published since 1979. The majority of interventions took place in exclusively urban areas and in the US. The use of point-of-purchase information with increased availability was the only category that had sufficient evidence. The remaining 8 categories had insufficient evidence due to interventions showing no, minimal or mixed findings, limited reporting of awareness and effectiveness, low volume of research or weak study designs. In general, evidence regarding effective community-based strategies to promote healthy eating in restaurants is still limited, especially with regard to interventions in rural areas. Support for the rigorous evaluation of environmental interventions like these can be one avenue to address obesity.

Biography

Jennifer Valdivia Espino is a second year PhD student in the Department of Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The manuscript associated with this project is currently under review and will be her first peer-reviewed publication.

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