

A Culturally Friendly Web-based Hybrid Intervention to Prevent Obesity: The SALSA Study

Scherezade Mama^{1,2}, Ashley Medina¹, Raul Orlando Edwards³, Lorna McNeill⁴, Ygnacio Lopez¹, Rebecca E. Lee¹

¹University of Houston, Texas Obesity Research Center, ²University of Texas School of Public Health, ³Strictly Street Salsa Dance Company, ⁴University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

First author classification: Doctoral student

Poor dietary habits, physical inactivity and obesity are vexing problems among minorities in industrialized nations, resulting from innovations in industrialization and societal trends away from typical cultural practices that improve health outcomes. Interventions are needed that are culturally relevant and appealing to diverse audiences. SAVING Lives, Staying Active (SALSA) was an 8-week randomized controlled cross-over design, pilot study to promote fruit and vegetable (FV) consumption and regular physical activity (PA) as a means to preventing obesity among women of color in Houston, TX. Participants completed measures of dietary habits, physical activity, social support, self efficacy, and demographics at 4 time points. Women ($N=50$; $M=42$ years) who participated were overweight (M BMI=29.7 kg/m²; M body fat=38.5%) and reported low levels of FV consumption ($M=4.2$ servings) and PA ($M=10.4$ MET-min/wk). All were randomized to a 4-week web-based dietary education or bi-weekly Latin dance group. After 4 weeks of intervention, women switched groups to ensure that everyone received both treatments, consistent with community requests. FV consumption ($p=0.02$) and social support for PA from peers ($p<.01$) increased significantly over time by group after controlling for age. PA significantly increased at all time points ($p<0.05$). No other variables changed over time. Data suggest that web-based interventions to improve dietary habits and salsa dance interventions to improve PA can be culturally relevant and engaging to women of color. Web-based interventions may help to raise interest not only among participants, but also among friends of participants, adding value to health promotion efforts. Findings suggest cross-over study designs can accommodate community desires while maintaining scientific integrity, important for community participatory research.