

Solving the Obesity Epidemic in African American and Hispanic Communities: Voices from the Community

MAMA SK^{1,2}, SOLTERO EG¹, LEDOUX TA¹, and LEE RE¹

¹Texas Obesity Research Center; University of Houston; Houston, Texas; ²School of Public Health; University of Texas Health Science Center; Houston, Texas

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *Science & Community: Ending Obesity Improving Health* (Science & Community) aimed at reducing obesity in Houston by developing partnerships and collaborating with community organizations to identify community research priorities and develop an obesity reduction program. **Methods:** Partnership members were recruited from Science & Community events and invited to participate in in-depth interviews to gain insight on obesity prevalence, causes, and solutions. Partnership and community members (N=22) completed a 60-90 minute in-depth interview with a trained Science & Community team member. The interview guide consisted of 30 questions about pressing health problems in the community, potential solutions to health problems and obesity, and how the environment has impacted obesity and health behaviors in the community. Interviews were led by trained researchers and were transcribed by an external medical transcription company. Transcribed interviews were coded independently by two coders in ATLAS.ti version 6.2. **Results:** Interviewees (n=12 women and 10 men) were mostly Hispanic or Latino (n=9) and African American (n=7). Common problems identified by interviewees were childhood obesity, balancing a healthy diet, and physical inactivity. Interviewees identified obesity as a major problem in their communities and cited access to quality food and physical activity resources as both the problem and a solution. Additional emergent themes focused on solutions and included increasing awareness and education, coordinated efforts among organizations and using an ecologic approach to combat obesity. **Conclusions:** Community insight gleaned from this study be used to enhance relevance and sustainability of programs developed to reduce obesity and suggests possible avenues for participatory research and intervention.

KEY WORDS: Minority health, Community health, Obesity, Qualitative research, Interviews