

**Engaging Hispanic Seniors to Define Healthy Eating: A
Community Based Participatory Pilot Study**

CANTU AG and RUSHING JE

University of Texas Health Science Center; San Antonio, Texas

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Although nutritional education was provided consistently to a group of Mexican American seniors, it was found that the seniors were not translating this into behavior change. The purpose of this study was to utilize Community Based Participatory Research to understand how Mexican American seniors define healthy eating. **Methods:** Fourteen seniors (M=73 yrs.) were administered the Nutritional Screen Initiative and interviewed about definitions of healthy eating and sociocultural influences on eating habits. **Results:** The study demonstrated that although the seniors do have an appropriate definition of healthy eating, three influences consistently surfaced that were barriers, eating alone, finding ways to change eating habits but stay with cultural tradition, and not “feeling well” enough to eat more nutritious foods. **Conclusions:** Results suggest implementing activities that address these barriers rather than just educating seniors about proper nutrition may have more impact relative to changing behavior.

KEY WORDS: Hispanic, Mexican American, Nutrition, Community Based Participatory Research