

Physical Fitness and Energy Balance Activity of “Promotora” Community Health Care Workers in the South Texas-Mexico Border Region

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Latinas along the U.S.-Mexico border are among the most physically inactive and obese segment of the U.S. population. There is widespread recognition of the cultural appropriateness of *promotoras* (community health workers) in health education among Latino communities. **METHODS:** We conducted a cross-sectional study with 17 *promotoras* who reside/work in the region to investigate their physical fitness and energy balance behaviors. *Promotoras* completed physical testing and self-report on physical activity and dietary behaviors. Participants wore an accelerometer for one week. In addition, the validity of an activity self-report instrument to assess cardiorespiratory fitness was tested. **RESULTS:** Participants' average body mass index (BMI) was high (31.4 ± 7.18 kg/m²); 76.5% were overweight or obese, 30% very or extremely obese. Physical functioning levels were low (cardiorespiratory capacity 26.0 ± 9.1 VO₂/kg/min; step test 77.4 steps/2-minutes). Objectively measured moderate-vigorous PA (114.6 ± 87.0 minutes/week) was less than PA recommendations. Accelerometry activity significantly correlated with self-report ($r = 0.71$, $p=0.009$). Participants self-reported consuming 1889.2 ± 492.8 kCal/day. **CONCLUSION:** *Promotoras'* energy balance behaviors were similar to women where they reside/work. *Promotoras* engaging in health-promoting behaviors may enhance their effectiveness as change agents in the communities they serve.