

The Effects of Language Barriers on Physical Activity of “Promotora” Community Health Care Workers in the South Texas-Mexico Border Region

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is not only characterized by elevated school drop-out rates, poverty and unemployment, but also physical inactivity, obesity as well as language barriers. The purpose of this study was to assess the agreement between commonly used self-reported methods compared with objectively measured physical activity amongst community health worker; *promotoras*. **METHODS:** Our cross-sectional study, 17 *promotoras* (adult Latinas) capable of engaging in moderate-vigorous PA. We conducted anthropometric assessments (body mass index (BMI), body fatness (%)), assessed PA (accelerometry, and Jurca non-exercise test), and measured self-reported PA behaviors. **RESULTS:** *Promotoras* BMI were similar to other Latina women in the United States and averaged 40.0 ± 7.1 % body fat. More than half of our sample were either overweight or obese. *Promotoras* also exhibited a low estimated cardiorespiratory capacity of 26.0 ± 9.1 VO₂/kg/min from the Jurca non-exercise test which was also significantly correlated with measured accelerometry activity. All tests were assessed using Spearman correlation analyses at a significance level of .05. **CONCLUSION:** Since some of the greatest health disparities occur among those who do not speak English as a first language; improvements in language barriers may enable Latinas to obtain, process and understand basic health and physical activity information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. This study provides insight on the effect language barriers may have on Latina’s health outcomes in the RGV.