



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES CLINICAL & POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM

Ph.D. THESIS DEFENSE

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MENTOR: Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Monday, April 13, 2020 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom Meeting

Invitations will be sent individually to invited guests

A mixed methods study of local policy, systems, and environmental approaches supportive of healthy eating and physical activity

Background: Policy, system and environmental (PSE) approaches can sustainably improve opportunities for healthy eating (HE) and active transportation (AT) and require cross-sector collaboration. Adopting and implementing PSEs is complex and not well understood.

Methods: First, using a national probability survey dataset of US local health departments (LHD) inclusion of HE and AT PSE strategies in local Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs) was examined. Next, a content analysis of current CHIP documents provided data for multilevel latent class analyses to identify classes of CHIPs based on patterns of PSE-strategy alignment with six key activities that facilitate change. Lastly, semi-structured interviews informed an exploration of early stage Complete Streets policy implementation in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Results: Less than half of US LHDs reported developing a CHIP containing any HE policy (32%) or AT (46%) strategies. Two classes of CHIPs were identified: CHIPs in Class A (HE: 71%; Physical Activity (PA): 79%) simply identified a PSE solution; Class B CHIPs (HE: 29%; PA 21%) mostly included PSE strategies that comprehensively addressed multiple key activities. Seven themes emerged reflecting recommended approaches and important factors for early Complete Streets implementation.

Conclusions: This mixed methods study provides a novel understanding of the status, development and implementation of PSE strategies in relation to collaborative strategic health improvement planning efforts. CHIPs are underutilized to promote PSE strategies and few CHIPs in our study developed strategies that comprehensively address the process of PSE-change. Qualitative findings indicate that CHIPs may provide a guiding structure for policy adoption and implementation.

Mentor(s)

Stephenie Lemon, PhD

Dissertation Exam Committee

Kathleen M. Mazor, PhD (Chair)

Wenjun Li, PhD

Milagros C. Rosal, PhD

Elizabeth Ablah, PhD