

FAST FOOD DENSITY AND HEALTH DISPARITIES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

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BACKGROUND

African American neighborhoods are more densely populated and household incomes are lower than white household incomes. In these neighborhoods, there is race-based residential segregation that is a fundamental cause of fast-food density (7) and the need for food that costs less. Thus, there are significantly more fast-food outlets in African American neighborhoods that provide lower-cost food options, but they are less nutritious.

PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

Fast food density (number of restaurants per square mile) or food environment (the physical presence of food that affects a person's diet has adverse effects on the health of a population. (5)

OBJECTIVE

To conduct a literature review on fast food density, food environment, and the influence it has on the health of the African American population.

METHOD

SEARCH STRATEGY: internet sources like Medline, PubMed, Scopus databases, and Google scholar. Searches were done using search terms "fast food density," "food environment," "food desert," "community health," "health disparities," "built environment," "African American," "determinants of health," "public health," "hypertension," "cardiovascular disease," "diabetes," and "obesity. Studies chosen - combination of cross-sectional, ecological, multi-level studies and systemic reviews. Selected articles were dated 2006 thru 2017.

RESULTS

Fast food density and the food environment are main risk factor for consuming poor-quality foods. Due to location of fast food, the low cost of fast food, and the density of fast-food establishments in African American neighborhoods, the health of African Americans is negatively affected. Frequent consumption of fast food is associated with health disparities.

CONCLUSION

Some health conditions affecting African Americans are directly affected by fast food density and the food environment in African American neighborhoods.

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION

Discussion: Fast-food density and the food environments negative effect among African Americans is a public health concern.

Recommendation: Increasing individual health literacy, perhaps start in the places where trust is already established like schools, religious organizations, and community centers. Introduce and popularize basic health education and training. Development of better food and land use regulations that limit the number of fast-food outlets in neighborhoods, and/or encourage a more healthful eating environment is recommended as well.(13)

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