**Healthy Corner Store “Heart Smarts” Program**


1,4,6 The Food Trust, Philadelphia, PA, 2,3 Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA, 5 Lankenau Medical Center, Wynnewood, PA

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**INTRODUCTION**

Philadelphia has an enormous burden of cardiovascular disease including heart disease and stroke as leading causes of death. Lack of access to affordable, healthy food in low-income areas contributes to obesity and other diet-related conditions. Corner stores are ubiquitous in urban, poor neighborhoods and often the only place to purchase food in a community. In Philadelphia, The Food Trust’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative works with a network of corner stores to increase access to healthy food, provide nutrition education, and curb tobacco. TFT is partnering with Jefferson University Hospital and Lankenau Medical Center to host free health screenings with a referral process for at-risk customers.

**HEART SMARTS OBJECTIVES**

The program couples in store nutrition education and health screenings with the goal of promoting healthy eating and reducing modifiable risk factors for heart disease through a corner store based intervention. The program consists of:

- In-store and community based education on healthy eating and heart disease prevention including taste test and cooking demos
- Free health screenings (blood pressure, BMI, stroke and heart disease assessments) conducted on a monthly basis by health professionals
- Referrals and follow-up for all participants with high blood pressure
- Referrals for quitting smoking and insurance exchange

Along with in-store education and screening corner stores receive technical assistance and resources from The Food Trust to stock and sell an expanded selection of healthy food.

Customers who participate in the program receive $4 in “Heart Bucks” a coupon incentive program to encourage participants to make healthy choices in corner stores, along with a store tour to assist in identifying healthy items.

**RESULTS**

**Thomas Jefferson University Hospital**

Project Dates: January – December 2015  
Number of stores with screenings: 11

**Overview of Participants**

1,171 screenings  
873 participants reached  
54.4% men; 45.5% women  
69.7% Black, 16.2% Latino, 3.5% White, 2.8% Other/mixed race  
Age ranged from 18 to 96 (mean = 45.9 years)

- 50.1% self-reported they were smokers
- 24.7% were uninsured
- 14.7% did not have a primary care provider
- The average systolic/diastolic blood pressure at baseline was 127/80
- 34.9% normal, 28.9% pre-hypertensive, 36.2% hypertensive
- 32.8% were overweight and 32.5% were obese

**Lankenau Medical Center**

Project Dates: November 2015 – April 2016  
Number of stores with screenings: 1

**Overview of Participants**

136 screenings  
154 participants reached  
53.8% men; 43.2% women; 2.8% not collected

- 89.4% Black, 4.8% Latino, 1.9% White, 2.8% Other/mixed race
- Age ranged from 19 to 78 (mean = 45.2 years)
- 65.5% self-reported they were smokers
- 31.1% did not have a primary care provider
- Baseline blood pressure: 15.4% normal, 28.7% pre-hypertensive, 55.9% hypertensive
- 27.0% were overweight and 40.5% were obese

**Follow up (Results from Thomas Jefferson University Pilot Year)**

Out of 777 individuals screened during the pilot year, 15% (n = 114) returned for one or more for follow-up screenings

- Of the 114 who were rescreened:
  - 46 (40.35%) showed an improvement of systolic BP (a decrease of ≥ 5 mm Hg)
  - 69 (60.5%) showed an improvement of diastolic BP (a decrease of ≥ 2 mm Hg)

**Follow-up of Those with Elevated Pressure**

- 59 of the 256 (62%) were successfully reached by telephone, and of this group, 82 (32%) had visited their PCP;
- 41 (25.6%) participants reported visiting their PCP and their BP was normal
- 11 (6.9%) participants reported visiting their PCP and their BP treatment was changed
- 6 (3.8%) participants reported visiting their PCP and are now back on BP drug treatment
- 12 (7.5%) participants reported that their blood pressure treatment was not changed and their BP was normal
- 12 (7.5%) undiagnosed hypertensive participants saw their PCP and were prescribed BP medication

**Follow up with Smokers**

342 participants self-reported they were smokers with 13 (3.8%) reporting an improvement in smoking cessation at follow-up visit or via telephone follow-up

- 4 of the 13 (30.8%) reported completely quitting smoking
- 9 of the 13 (69.2%) reported a reduction in cigarette smoking from an average of 10.4 cigarettes to 5.1 cigarettes per day

**Nutrition Education and Heart Bucks**

- 94% of those that participate in nutrition education stated they increased their knowledge on how to prepare fruits and vegetables.
- 89% stated they increased their knowledge and intention to improve heart healthy food choices.
- 22,463 Heart Bucks were distributed in TJU stores with a 96% redemption rate.

**Items customers typically purchase are:**

1. Cokes
2. Food items
3. Cigarettes
4. Lottery and Deli
5. Non-food items

**Items purchased with Heart Bucks:**

1. Fresh fruit
2. Water
3. Eggs
4. Tuna
5. Whole wheat bread

**Discussion**

With the growth of healthy corner store initiatives across the country, combined with increased interest from primary care partners to conduct community outreach to support community benefit programming, the “Heart Smarts” model is a feasible program that links primary care to public health and is accepted by the community.

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