

Key informant perceptions of factors that prevent or facilitate children's fruit and vegetable intake in regional and remote Western Australia

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Aim and relevance

This component of a wider study aimed to explore key informants' perceptions of factors that positively or negatively influence fruit and vegetable consumption among regional/remote WA children. The results will inform a) policies which support the provision of affordable, quality fruit and vegetables to regional/remote areas, and b) community-based interventions. The results of this study will enhance knowledge and have wide-reaching community health benefits at multiple levels of influence.

Methods

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. The interview guide contained 14 questions. Data was collected from individual interviews with six key informants in 2013, three in 2014 and four in 2015. The interview guide was underpinned by the Rychetnik et al (2003) conceptual framework¹ and in addition, contained questions about the quantity, barriers and facilitators of fruit and vegetable consumption; the relationship between food insecurity and fruit and vegetable consumption; motivation towards and strategies to increase consumption. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using QSR NVivo (version 10).

Results

Overall, 13 participants took part in this qualitative component. The interviews occurred with a wide range of informants, including 30% (n= 4) Health Workers, 23% (n=3) Store Owners/Managers, 23% (n=3) School Workers, 23% (n=3) Youth/Family Workers. Statements related to barriers and enablers to children's fruit and vegetable consumption. The top five barriers included lack of knowledge/skills; inaccessible and unavailable at the shop; prohibitive price; poor quality; and lack of service provision. The most frequently cited barrier to fruit and vegetable consumption by all informant types was knowledge and skills. Anecdotes included:

"Knowing that you could actually make a healthy stew and feed baby off that. That would be better for the baby than the pie ... Just boil some veggies; pumpkin, carrot and mush it up"
(Youth and Family Worker).

The top five enablers included school provision; community and home access and availability; enjoyment of taste; school education; and community and in-store promotion. The primary facilitator of fruit and vegetable consumption cited across informant types, school provision, was associated with the words 'see' and 'promotion'. Comments from informants included:

"There are a lot of schools cooking lunches and providing fruit and veg for morning tea and that. The kids are lucky that there is a focus on healthy eating at the school. They are all providing fruits and snacks and generally some kind of lunch program where they're putting veggies in with the meals." (Health Worker).

Conclusions and policy recommendation

This study expands on current knowledge and increases our understanding of the barriers and facilitators of fruit and vegetable consumption among children living in regional/remote WA, from a range of informant perspectives. It is recommended that health practitioners utilise study findings to create practical, relevant and locally tailored initiatives that are community driven. Policy-makers should support food literacy skill-building policies across a variety of settings (e.g. schools and community centres), thereby facilitating multiple conduits for health behaviour change in regional/remote WA.

Acknowledgment

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Reference

1. Rychetnik L, Webb, K, Story, L, Katz, T, Food Security Options Paper: A Planning Framework and Menu of Options for Policy and Practice Interventions. Gladesville, NSW: NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition, 2003.

Presenter

Stephanie Godrich has worked across various public health areas including research and evaluation, community based nutrition education, corporate health and project management. Her focus over the last five years has been in regional and remote WA communities, where she led the development an award winning food literacy program. After talking with communities, she realised the best way to advocate for equitable food opportunities would be with evidence. Therefore, her current PhD research aims to investigate the relationship between food security determinants and fruit and vegetable intake amongst children across regional and remote WA, resulting in a recommendations document for both policy and practice.