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MASS INDEX/SCHOOL HEALTH-PROMOTION PROGRAM
ELLEN HEGENAUER: ENHANCING HEALTHFUL EATING AND
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS
THROUGH SCHOOL HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM, BANGKOK,
THAILAND DISSERTATION ADVISOR: ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
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Objectives: 1) To determine eating and physical activity behaviors among students
enrolled at The American School of Bangkok; 2) To identify factors associated with eating and
physical activity patterns; 3) To develop a coordinated school health promotion program; and
4) To determine the effectiveness of the school health promotion program in enhancing
healthful eating and physical activity among the students.

Methods: A one-group pre-test/post test quasi-experimental study was conducted at the
American School of Bangkok. A nutrition screening was carried out to determine students’
BMI status. Socio-demographic, psychosocial, behavioral and environmental data among 72
students from 4th – 6th grades were collected through a survey.

Results: Findings reveal that overweight is a health problem among the students at the
American School of Bangkok. A high proportion of students had poor diet. The majority of the
students had low physical activity and high inactivity levels. Results indicated that factors
associated with eating behavior include number of meals eaten at home, type of meals eaten at
home, knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, eating self-efficacy, parental influence, parental knowledge,
and parental attitudes/beliefs. Factors associated with physical activity include exercise self-
efficacy, parental influence, and use of exercise/recreation center. Exercise/recreation facility
use was the only important factor in inactivity among the students. Both eating and physical
activity behaviors were positively associated with weight status among the participants.

A school health-promotion program was identified as a strategy in improving eating
and physical activity behaviors among the students. Findings from the situation analysis
facilitated the development and implementation of the school health program. The school
health promotion program was instrumental in improvements made in eating and physical
activity behaviors among the subjects. The mobilization of all school constituents including
school authorities, personnel, staff, teachers, students and parents and their participation in the
program were important ingredients to the success of the school health promotion program.

Conclusion: Whilst the relationship between childhood nutrition and adult disease is
not yet fully understood, there is some evidence that diet and physical activity patterns affect
nutritional status. The results from this study suggest that diet, physical activity and inactivity
patterns are likely contributors to an increased prevalence of overweight among students in the
study. The findings also imply that restaurant food consumption and non-utilization of
exercise/recreation facility are important contributors to higher BMI among the students.

The development and implementation of a School Health Promotion program was found to be successful in enhancing healthful eating and physical activity among the students.

Recommendations: A comprehensive school health promotion program was proven to
be successful in enhancing healthful eating and physical activity among the students at the
American School of Bangkok. Future programs should search for ways to include caregivers in
nutrition education because most modifiable behaviors of children and adolescents can [only]
be facilitated by their caregivers. In addition, positive behaviors of healthful eating and physical
activity that were learned at school can only be sustained through family involvement so that
such behaviors are reinforced outside of school. Students and caregivers should learn how to
make healthier choices when ordering from fast food restaurants. For physical activity, the use
of recreation/exercise center is dependent upon the creation of fun activities for children and
adolescents.

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