GOOD FOOD SYSTEMS: FOOD CHALLENGES IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

PARTNERSHIP Sought: Scalable. For Discussion

Good nutrition throughout life is fundamental to the maintenance of wellbeing and the prevention of disease. It plays a vital role in pregnancy and early childhood, prevents obesity, Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

We know that improving nutrition is crucial to closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Australians, particularly those living in remote communities.

THE NEED

- In some remote communities, as little as 2.2% of total food expenditure is on fruit and just 5.4% on vegetables. Sodium intake, mostly via processed foods, is nearly 6 times the average intake.
- A standard basket of food costs 45% more in remote NT communities than in Darwin and more again than other parts of Australia.
- Aboriginal communities consume full sugar soft drinks, especially Coca Cola, at enormously disproportionate rates. Of the top ten most commonly purchased items at one Central Desert store for example, four are soft drink products.
- Kidney disease and low birth weights (a common result of poor nutrition during pregnancy) are linked. This is part of the reason why Indigenous Australians make up 10% of all dialysis patients, despite being only 2.5% of the population.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Good Food Systems (GFS) is a package of nutrition-based initiatives planned for roll out in 10 remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory over three years. The program seeks to improve Aboriginal health by focusing on nutrition and tangible, practical initiatives driven by strong community engagement.

The project will do this by helping to overlay a participatory planning and evaluation framework on a whole lot of nutrition related activity that is normally happening in a community and helps people to use evidence to make decisions and to monitor progress.

Using point of sales data and routinely collected health data, the research will build on Menzies’ current nutrition research successes in remote communities with further research to examine the interrelationship between nutritional deficits, community purchasing patterns and the role of environmental determinants within the context of Indigenous communities such as remote store infrastructure, governance models, transport systems and pricing.

PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

Data gathered via this large-scale pilot will augment current understandings of purchasing patterns and nutritional deficits and pave the way for a major evidence based and co-ordinated program to be rolled out in communities across the NT.

The project aligns with the goals of the Federal Stronger Futures Policy to strengthen local capacity and decision making to improve food supply and co-ordinates with other services and NT Government initiatives.

Specific outcomes of Good Food Systems will include:
- Community led management of improving stores to promote better eating habits (where strong store boards are in place) and locally led promotional activities
- Improved relationships with other community service providers to negotiate best-cost options for food delivery
- Better community awareness and motivation to make healthy choices
- Increased availability of healthy food options
- Data of food-purchasing patterns that will track food supply, quality, cost and purchasing information

Contact
Colin Baillie, Head of Development
Menzies School of Health Research
Phone: 0410 634 889
Colin.Baillie@menzies.edu.au
www.menzies.edu.au