TAILORING A CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (CVD) RISK REDUCTION INTERVENTION TO RURAL AGRICULTURE WORKERS.

Authors: Paula S. Schulz PhD RN, Lani Zimmerman PhD RN, Patrik Johansson MD MPH

For many rural communities in Nebraska, agriculture is the largest employing industry.

Background: Adults in rural Nebraska suffer from higher rates of heart attack, coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and diabetes compared to overall state statistics. Because of the large number of rural residents involved in agricultural businesses in Nebraska, unique strategies are needed to address health promotion and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk reduction. Specific aims of this community based participatory study were to engage community participants to identify: 1) needs related to CVD prevention and 2) unique strategies which would be feasible and acceptable to the rural agriculture worker CVD population.

Methods: Two focus groups with 6-8 farmer/agriculture workers in each group were conducted in a five county area. CVD risk factors most prevalent in the focus group participants were hyperlipidemia and hypertension.

Results: The farmers/agriculture workers described challenges to staying healthy as “the nature of their business” involving long days during planting and harvest seasons with little time for preparation of healthy foods, and a tendency to eat readily available food that is often high in fat and calories. Physical inactivity was acknowledged as a common problem resulting from increased automation in farm machinery and operations. Pride in their rural communities was evident as participants reported participating in local health fairs and educational programs at the local level. The farmers/agriculture workers reported good understanding of CV risk factors and consistently reported the challenge of motivating themselves to change their lifestyle. All participants reported insurance coverage and visits to their primary health care provider in the past year.

Implications: Findings from this study can be used to tailor and implement a comprehensive CVD risk reduction intervention that is feasible to implement in the rural agriculture environment.