IDENTIFYING YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN RISK BEHAVIORS AS POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS TO ADULT CVD

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Abstract: Data collected by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have shown that increasing numbers of Mississippi children were classified as overweight, at risk of becoming overweight, not participating in even moderate physical activity, and not enrolled in physical education (PE) classes. The shortage of quality school-based prevention activities suggests that these children may grow into adulthood with CVD health problems. The purpose of this study was to examine normal practices of African American youth to assess the extent of behaviors in need of CVD prevention/intervention. As efforts intensify in the State of Mississippi to address the prevalence of CVD, a major priority has become the identification of the risk behaviors currently practiced by the state’s youths. This knowledge is vital to targeting early development of chronic disease. The students were administered a survey that requested information about their behaviors and practices. Their responses on the survey were examined to assess priority health risk behaviors and possible contributors to the development of CVD. Students were engaged in many daily behavioral practices that were unhealthy, including poor dietary practices and inadequate physical activity. The rise in overweight and obesity were also seen as growing problems known to contribute to chronic disease in adulthood. Carefully designed prevention/intervention programs should be introduced to children as part of the school curriculum to address negative student behavioral practices. Students can learn to take control of their lives by learning effective strategies to improve their health status.

Key Words: CVD, Risk behaviors, African Americans