

Health promotion and disease prevention

with Dr Alice Ammerman

Talking points

KNOWLEDGE

1. What is a Mediterranean diet?
2. What is a chronic disease? Give examples.

COMPREHENSION

3. Why is teaching people about healthy food not necessarily sufficient for changing lifestyles?
4. Why can an unhealthy diet lead to chronic disease?

APPLICATION

5. What questions would you ask Alice to understand the evidence base behind the Med-South Lifestyle Program (MSLP) and Good Bowls?

ANALYSIS

6. Advice on what constitutes a healthy diet varies a lot. Why do you think this is?
7. Many people adopt new year's resolutions to eat healthier, and many of these resolutions fail. Considering behavioural psychology, what do you think may be the reasons behind these failures, and how does the MSLP potentially address these?

SYNTHESIS

8. Alice mentions the importance of community leaders in influencing lifestyle changes. If you were a researcher on her team, how might you approach these people and organisations? What might you ask of them, and what tools might you give them to help promote change? In return, what might you learn from them?

EVALUATION

9. Today, over 60% of US adults are considered overweight or obese, a percentage that has been rising for forty years. What do you think has led to this trend, despite an ever-growing evidence base about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle? What measures might stop or reverse this trend? How would you also address concerns about weight stigma?

Activity

The Centers for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention are examining the effects of the MSLP on many different aspects of people's health. For instance, Alice mentions she will investigate the effects of MSLP on incidence of dental disease in children.

Think about other specific health issues the team might be able to assess and measure, such as:

- Incidence/severity of chronic diseases
- Body weight
- Physical capabilities
- Lifestyle changes
- Mental health

Choose two, and design a study to test the effects of the MSLP on these aspects.

1. Define your research question. What exactly are you investigating?
2. Define what measurements you will take. Consider in advance how you could analyse these.
3. Decide on your methodology:
 - a. How will you carry out your experiment? What resources will you need?
 - b. What sample size of people will you study?
 - c. What variables are you measuring, and what variables do you need to control?
 - d. How can you ensure the health, safety and privacy of participants are protected?
4. Present your proposal to a 'funder' (a classmate). You will need to demonstrate:
 - a. Why this research question is important.
 - b. That your methodology is robust and results will be meaningful.
 - c. What level of funding/resourcing you will need.
5. Imagine you have carried out the experiment. Design a presentation to communicate your results to a group of community leaders. What key messages are you aiming to convey? What actions do you hope they will take in response to your presentation?

More resources

- You can find out more about the Med-South Lifestyle Program, including the evidence behind it and the results it has achieved, on the HPDP's website: hpdp.unc.edu/med-south-lifestyle-program
- You can find out more about Good Bowls, including their recommendations for healthy diets and the work they do with communities, on the project website: www.eatgoodbowls.com/about
- This video from Mayo Clinic gives an overview of how a Mediterranean diet may benefit brain health: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TqNV2Aodew