

# DIETARY PATTERNS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Deidre Archie

Project Supervisor: Dr. Selby Nichols

2009

**Background:** In Trinidad and Tobago, obesity and other lifestyle diseases are increasing significantly. This is also occurring at the regional and global level. These chronic diseases such as Diabetes Mellitus, Cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension are major public health concerns.

**Objective:** The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the dietary patterns of university students can be characterized as healthy.

**Design:** The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the dietary patterns of university students can be characterized as healthy. Dietary patterns 255 students participated in the study, 180 females and 75 males between the ages the participants were conveniently chosen for this cross sectional study. The self administered questionnaires contained information that covered socio demographic data, environmental factors such as proximity to fast food restaurants, the role of the media, physical activity habits, a food frequency questionnaire and a 24hr recall.

**Results:** Data collected was analysed using SPSS version 12.0. Data was analysed by gender and year of entry. The results indicated that students in their first year of entry consumed more snacks, sodas and dietary fat than students in their third year. Proximity of fast food vendors is associated with an increased consumption of fast foods. 61.6% of students' diet is poor, 28.6% of students' diet is sufficient, 9% students' diet is good and only 0.8% can be described as a healthy diet.

**Conclusion:** Nutrition intervention is required for university students. This intervention should include basic knowledge of healthy eating.