

TO ASSESS FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONGST THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES STUDENTS (19 - 30YEARS) AND TO ASSESS POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OBESITY AND BEING OVER WEIGHT

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Background: Research suggests a connection to fast food consumption and being overweight or obese (Duffey et al., 2007; Inagami et al., 2009; Currie et al., 2009). Obesity or being overweight, in the early adult years, is known to generally continue into late adulthood (Duffey et al., 2007). This is indicated by an increase in the participants Body Mass Index (BMI) (Inagami et. al., 2009; Duffey et al. 2007; Hickson et al., 2011). The fast food industry is a key component in forming an obesogenic environment, which is an environment that promotes a high energy intake and discourages physical activity (Nelms et al., 2010, 256).

Objective: To assess the students of the University of the West Indies (U.W.I) fast food perceptions, knowledge and consumption practices.

Design: Cross-sectional study at the University of the West Indies (UWI). Fast food knowledge, perceptions and consumption practices was assessed using a questionnaire. Body Composition Analysis was conducted using the Omron Full Body Sensor (Body Composition Monitor and Scale) HBF-510W . Blood Pressure readings were also collected from the population using a blood pressure machine. One hundred students of the UWI, all selected at random.

Results: There was no association found between gender, blood pressure and frequency of fast food consumption. Students within this population were also found to be knowledgeable on the health effects of fast food (over) consumption. Nonetheless there was a significant increase in weight gain and the frequency of fast food consumption ($<.05$) since commencement of studies. No association was found between frequency of fast food consumption and present weight ($R, .002, p=.05$).

Conclusion: Social interactions amongst family and friends as well as location of a fast food restaurant are strongly linked to the frequency of fast food consumption amongst students. It was also seen that there has been an increase in weight and level of fast food consumption since attending the University of the West Indies (U.W.I).