

Re: Potential MMWR

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From: Anna Caffarelli
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2008 3:33 PM
To:
Subject: FW: Potential MMWR on calorie information

From: Thomas R. Frieden
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2008 3:32 PM
To: Anna Caffarelli
Subject: FW: Potential MMWR on calorie information

From: Thomas R. Frieden
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2008 11:40 AM
To: 'Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)'; Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR on calorie information

Fred,

Thanks for your comments. Although we recognize the limitations of the analysis, we don't agree on your critique – but we can agree to disagree.

At this point we'll move on for this project, but keep MMWR in mind for future initiatives.

All the best,

Tom

From: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:fxs6@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Saturday, December 29, 2007 1:38 PM
To: Thomas R. Frieden; Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR on calorie information

Tom,

Sorry it took me a bit to get back to you. I read the article carefully and asked a few others to also take a look, and I do not feel it bears publishing in MMWR as it stands. The conclusions being drawn by the study are, of course, problematic because of the lurking probability that people who look at caloric information are much different from everybody else, a priori. The fact that the chain under study was Subway is also a problem for interpretation because that chain is associated with lower-calorie meals and is marketed that way.

In my mind, it is not possible to conclude that looking at the caloric info is causally related to reduced calorie purchase. yes, there is an association, no doubt, but the association might just be reflecting the psychology of people who both look at caloric information and eat fewer calories. To establish causality, there would have to be other probably longitudinal study methods, like looking at consumption before and after caloric info were posted.

I am not saying that this cannot be fixed scientifically somehow in the report, but the problem is that MMWR is not a good format for presenting epi data for which the interpretation might be controversial or complex, especially

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related to confounding. There just is not enough space in 1400 words to discuss the possible problems with interpretation.

One other thought: we were all intrigued by the caloric intake info itself, like the distribution of caloric intakes per meal etc. One reviewer said this alone might make a good MMWR and I tend to agree. You could just present the distribution of caloric intake and try to analyze what foods were the main high calorie culprits. This would be interesting and would probably make a nice MMWR because it would be fairly simple and would not try to make causal associations with looking at caloric info posted, and it could carry a pretty clean public health message--like x% of the total calorie intake at these places can be avoided by doing y.

One other small note. I am very impressed with what you are trying to do in NYC with obesity. I think many of us are, and I applaud you for thinking out of the box and taking some unpopular stands. We are interested in publishing more of your studies in MMWR, with the caveats above.

Happy New year to you,

Fred

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, December 18, 2007 4:46 PM
To: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR on calorie information

Doug,

Hope you are well. Any way to get a sense of how this is going or when we might hear something?

Thanks.

Tom

From: Thomas R. Frieden
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2007 2:13 PM
To: Thomas R. Frieden; 'Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)'
Cc: 'Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)'
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR on calorie information

Doug,

Resending along with the table.

Thanks.

Tom

From: Thomas R. Frieden
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2007 2:12 PM
To: 'Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)'
Cc: 'Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)'
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR on calorie information

Doug,

Efforts to address the serious and progressive epidemic of obesity are hampered by lack of information on the impact of various interventions. Some restaurants provide information on calories, but whether customers see that information and whether seeing information affects purchases has not been well studied. We recently conducted a large cross-sectional study of customers who had just purchased food from fast-food restaurants.

In brief, the study showed that less than 5% of patrons reported seeing calorie information except at one fast-food chain (Chain A), which displayed calorie information somewhat prominently. At Chain A (Subway), 31% saw the information, and those who reported seeing calorie information purchased 49 fewer calories than those who did not; those reporting that calorie information influenced them purchased 92 fewer calories than those who saw the information but said it did not influence them.

Of course, any cross-sectional survey has limitations. Chain A patrons could be more calorie-conscious, more likely to notice calorie information, or more likely to change purchase decisions based on calorie information. We have addressed these limitations in the editorial note.

In spite of these limitations, the information in this survey suggests that providing calorie information prominently may increase the proportion of restaurant customers who see the information and the proportion who reduce calorie purchases as a result. We know of no other survey of its kind, our sample was large and based on a random sample of restaurants, and non-participation in the survey appears to have been largely random. To the extent that our findings reflect restaurant patron behavior generally, prominent posting of calorie information could substantially reduce calorie consumption, overweight and obesity.

All the best,

Tom

From: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:aoe8@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Wednesday, November 14, 2007 8:35 AM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Sandra Welch; Judith Freeman
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Attached is a copy of MMWR Made Simple, which I pass out to new EISOs each year and which you might find helpful.
Doug

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 2:10 PM
To: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Sandra Welch; Judith Freeman
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Thanks, I'll call you then.

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From: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:aoe8@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 1:38 PM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Sandra Welch; Judith Freeman
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

404-498-2365. 8:30 will be fine.

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 11:58 AM
To: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Sandra Welch; Judith Freeman
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

8:30 tomorrow? What number would be good to call you at?

From: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:aoe8@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 11:50 AM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Mary T Bassett
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Tomorrow morning, I'll be available from 8 to 10. Also, Thursday morning from 8 to 9.

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 11:33 AM
To: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Mary T Bassett
Subject: Re: Potential MMWR

Understand completely. Is there a time we could chat briefly in the next few days?

----- Original Message -----

From: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) <aoe8@CDC.GOV>
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Mary T Bassett
Sent: Tue Nov 13 08:19:04 2007
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Tom,

How fast we can schedule and publish will depend upon how fast the report is cleared and whether it is accepted for publication by the Editor.

Doug

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 8:10 AM
To: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Mary T Bassett
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Ré: Potential MMWR

Doug,

Many thanks for your guidance on this. Perhaps we can chat later this week.

A simple question, though...is there any way we might get this out by mid-January?

Thanks.

Tom

From: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:fxs6@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Monday, November 12, 2007 3:19 PM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM); Hewitt, Suzanne M. (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Tom,

MMWR would be interested in receiving this report.

Please ask the authors to contact Doug Weatherwax at MMWR (who is cc'd on this email) to get further advice on submission of the manuscript and scheduling. Please also follow the guidance for MMWR contributors on the MMWR web site for contributors: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/author_guide.html <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/author_guide.html> .

Thanks for considering MMWR for your publication.

Also, please feel free to write or call me directly anytime.

Warm regards,

Fred

Frederic E. Shaw, MD, JD

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From: Thomas R. Frieden [<mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2007 2:51 PM
To: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM); Hewitt, Suzanne M. (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Fred,

We would just report the association. One could argue that those who were health-conscious were more likely to see the information. But at the one chain that published information prominently (which is the largest meal chain in NYC), 31% of people saw it, so it's hardly a small group. We asked people whether seeing calorie information changed their choices. Those who saw but said it had not affected them bought about the same amount (13 calories less). That suggests that all types of people will see it, but the information will influence the actions of some more than others. If calorie information is prominent enough you don't have to be different to see it.

The chain at that time had provided the information in a prominent manner but not nearly as prominent as what we have mandated. This suggests to us that providing the information in all chains in an even more prominent manner would certainly get more people to see it, and that some portion of them would be likely to reduce their caloric consumption.

Thanks.

Tom

From: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [<mailto:fxs6@CDC.GOV>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2007 1:06 PM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM); Hewitt, Suzanne M. (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Tom, do you intend that the report will rest on the conclusion that seeing the calorie information caused fewer calories to be purchased? That would be very hard to substantiate, would it not, because there are lots of reasons why persons who saw

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caloric information might purchase fewer calories. People who look at calorie information no doubt are fundamentally different than people who do not. Can you adjust for these factors somehow?

Fred

From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2007 5:53 PM
To: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Cc: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM); Hewitt, Suzanne M. (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Fred,

Here are the basics, attached and pasted below. It doesn't get into either limitations or implications, but does give the basics of the study and findings. Tomorrow's officially a City holiday, so would be a quiet time for a chat if it works for you. We spoke with Jennifer Seymour and two of her colleagues at Nutrition (Acting ADS and science officer).

All the best,

Tom

Background: Fast-food consumption has been linked to increased calorie intake and obesity. We conducted a cross-sectional survey of fast-food patrons to establish calories consumed per purchase, proportion seeing calorie information, and effect of seeing calorie information on calories purchased. One of the 11 fast-food chains sampled displayed calorie information conspicuously at point-of-purchase.

Methods: From March through June 2007 we administered surveys to adult patrons exiting a random sample of fast-food chains throughout New York City. Survey questions assessed food and beverage purchases, condiments added, observation of calorie information and, if it was seen, whether patrons reported that they used calorie information. We collected receipts to calculate total calories using published values.

Results: Overall, 11,829 receipts were collected from 273 sites. Customers purchased a mean of 824 calories (range, 303–1350); >30% purchased $\geq 1,000$ calories. Only 918 (8%) patrons reported seeing calorie information. Patrons of the chain posting calorie information were significantly more likely to see nutritional information than other patrons (32% vs. 4%, $p < 0.001$). Among this chain's patrons, those seeing calorie information purchased 47 fewer calories than those not seeing the information (688 calories vs. 735 calories, $p = 0.006$). Patrons who reported both seeing and using calorie information purchased 108 fewer calories than those not seeing the information (627 calories vs. 735 calories, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: Calorie information was not seen by >95% of restaurant customers at 10 chains, even after food purchase. Patrons at the one chain which displayed information prominently at the point-of-purchase were much more likely to see calorie information, and those who saw calorie information purchased fewer calories.

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From: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM) [mailto:fxs6@CDC.GOV]
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2007 6:24 AM
To: Thomas R. Frieden
Cc: Weatherwax, Douglas (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM); Hewitt, Suzanne M. (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: RE: Potential MMWR

Tom,

Yes we would be happy to discuss. Sounds interesting.

Could you ask your folks to put together a little 250-abstract with the methods, and the major findings laid out (something a little more expanded from the paragraph below) and get it back to me before we talk. Also, who did you speak with at Nutrition?

I am working off site this week, but available at 404 538 3967.

Thanks for thinking of MMWR.

Best regards,

Fred

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From: Thomas R. Frieden [mailto:tfrieden@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Saturday, November 03, 2007 2:05 PM
To: Shaw, Frederic (CDC/CCHIS/NCHM)
Subject: Potential MMWR