

University of Washington

Abstract

Access to Healthy and Less Healthy Food Options
In a Low-Income, Racially Diverse
Seattle Neighborhood

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There is a need for more place-based research on the food environments of low-income and/or racial minority populations for the purpose of developing policy initiatives aimed at decreasing diet-related chronic diseases.

The objective of this study was to describe the availability, price and quality of healthy food options in a low-income racially diverse Seattle neighborhood, to compare the availability of healthy versus less healthy food options and to determine if availability, price and quality of healthy food options are associated with racial composition and median household incomes of the neighborhood.

The research was carried out using an observational measure, the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey in Stores (NEMS-S), in 24 neighborhood food retail stores. Median scores indicate that stores had poor availability of healthy food options, priced them higher than the less healthy alternatives but had quality produce when it was available. Less healthy food options were much more available than healthy food options and no significant difference was seen in availability, price and quality of healthy food options by either neighborhood-level race or income.