

Obesity Among Working Age Adults: The Role of County-Level Persistent Poverty in Rural Disparities

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Intro/Background

- Rural residents have greater risk for being overweight or obese
 - ◆ Individual factors: poverty, education, PA, diet
 - ◆ Community factors: food choice, stores, rec facilities, access to health care
- Persistent Poverty Counties (PPC) are worse off (obviously)
- Is the Urban/Rural difference due to PPC effect?



Methods

- 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System + 2006 Area Resource File
- USDA definition of Persistent Poverty (1960-2000)
- USDA Food Atlas:
 - ◆ Grocery Stores per Sq.Mile
 - ◆ Fast Food Per-Capita Expenditures
 - ◆ % Without personal vehicle, > 1 mile from store
 - ◆ # Stores accepting SNAP Benefits



Results

- 1.6% lived in Rural PP Counties
- 25.6% considered obese
 - ◆ 34.5% in PPC
 - ◆ 28.4% Other Rural
 - ◆ 24.9% Urban
- Adjusted Analysis (with county level variables)
 - ◆ PPC no longer associated with obesity
 - ◆ High SNAP participation, high PC Fast Food
 - ◆ African American, Females



What's the Big Deal?

- Higher obesity rate in PP counties were offset by other factors
- Limited access to quality food (grocery stores), easier access to lower quality food (fast food), more with SNAP important
- Lower income areas = difficulty supporting grocery stores (food deserts)
- Explore alternatives: co-ops, farmers markets, fruit/veggie coupons, selective benefits



In Summary

- Can't change where people live
- Persistent Poverty = hard to make an impact
- Policy changes, innovative solutions
- Local empowerment, ownership key

