Ethical Dilemmas in Meeting Health Needs of Migrant Youth and Mothers During COVID-19 in New York City*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted food access among migrant teens and mothers in New York City? What ethical dilemmas has this raised for us as researchers and in our partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)?

**BACKGROUND**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the lives of New York City residents. This study investigates how food access has changed and the ethical significance of these changes among migrant youth and mothers.

**OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH AIMS**

- **Objectives**: Challenges in access to food and related risks for underserved populations, including changes in dietary behaviors and food insecurity in marginalized communities.
- **Research Aims**: Assess how changes to food access and security impact dietary behaviors, including changes in the consumption of food and related behaviors as a result of the pandemic.

**DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION**

The Migration and Nutrition Epidemiology (MaNE) Team at Mailman School of Public Health in Columbia University investigates the food-related exposure risk as related to development of chronic disease among Latino populations in Mexico and New York City. The three main studies centered in NYC from which we drew the participants for this study include:

- **Evaluation of Compramos Rico y Sano (CRyS)**: Columbia-Swedish Partnership Research (CSPR) aims to study a co-produced intervention in six urban regions, focusing on food insecurity strategies, and promoting healthy eating habits in 12 African American households.
- **Columbia Small Grants Program (CSP)**: A study evaluating the effectiveness of a co-produced intervention in two urban regions, focusing on food security and promoting healthy eating habits in 12 African American households.
- **Caminando (Walking)**: A study evaluating the effectiveness of a co-produced intervention in two urban regions, focusing on food security and promoting healthy eating habits in 12 African American households.

**METHODS**

- **New research participants were not recruited/identified for these interviews**:
  - All study subjects were already participating in short-term longitudinal studies.
  - IRB modifications
  - Telephone interviews with 2-3 interviewees (no in-person contact)

  - Brief, semi-structured interview with closed and open-ended questions asked at the time of another study assessment.
  - Food Access仙女 interviews about the pandemic’s impact on food preparation, food purchasing habits and effort to acquire food (Open-Ended).

- **Interviews transcribed and reviewed for themes**.

  - Reviewed by 6 team members, all bilingual in Spanish.
  - Among themes shared by respondents, focus on those linked to ethical dilemmas posed for us as researchers.

**TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rising Food Prices &amp; Safety</th>
<th>Government Food Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barriers to Accessing Food</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-Term Health Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**DISCUSSION**

The dietary changes are varied and can seem contradictory due to their multifactorial causes. The changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic mean that we will need to address dietary changes through educational modifications and food focus in CBOs partnerships. These modifications will need to balance the needs of the CBOs and participants. This will all be part of the process of adapting to a “new normal” moving forward.

**REFERENCES**


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