



American Public Health Association

APHA Meetings:
Online Program

In this Section

[Main Menu and Search](#)[Browse by Day](#)[Browse by Program](#)[Author Index](#)[Disclosure Index](#)[Personal Scheduler](#)[Browse Handouts](#)[Click to Register for the meeting now](#)Prevention and Wellness
Across the Life SpanAPHA 140TH ANNUAL MEETING & EXPO
OCT 27-31, 2012 SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Infancy



Teen Years



Retirement

269419 Firefighter perspectives on occupational and behavioral causes of obesity: A qualitative study

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Marnie Dobson, PhD, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*BongKyoo Choi, ScD MPH*, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*Peter Schnall, MD, MPH*, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*Erin Wigger*, Center for Social Epidemiology, Center for Social Epidemiology, Marina Del Rey, CA*Javier Garcia, MS*, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*Leslie Israel, DO MPH*, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*Dean Baker, MD MPH*, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA

As part of the FORWARD study (Choi et al., 2011), we investigate the work-related and behavioral causes of obesity from the perspective of firefighters. Qualitative approaches to building theory prioritize and privilege the knowledge of those living or working in their everyday worlds and as part of a participatory action research process can enhance research-to-practice goals. Firefighters have a unique set of working conditions and are generally considered a health-conscious population, yet rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors and heart attacks on the job are high. Very little research has been published investigating the work-related and health behavioral causes of obesity among firefighters' and almost no research draws on firefighter knowledge of the work environment. We conducted four focus groups with a total of 20 firefighters of every rank (firefighters/engineers, captains, and battalion chiefs), from a regional fire authority in California, with the intent of generating qualitative data about the health behavior and occupation-related causes of obesity as well as developing a firefighter-specific work and health questionnaire. Firefighters responded candidly with ideas about the causes of the high rates of obesity among them. Analysis revealed five main themes of central importance to firefighters: 1) the culture of eating, 2) sleep interruption, 3) leadership and physical fitness, 4) sedentary work, 5) aging and generational differences. The findings suggest a strong interrelationship between occupational and behavioral causes and implications will be discussed relative to the ongoing FORWARD study and to future interventions.

Learning Areas:

Chronic disease management and prevention

Occupational health and safety

Protection of the public in relation to communicable diseases including prevention or control

Social and behavioral sciences

Learning Objectives:

Discuss the inter-relatedness of occupational and behavioral risk factors for obesity. Explain the role of qualitative research in the development of interventions at the workplace for promoting health and reducing obesity.

Keywords: Obesity, Occupational Health

Presenting author's disclosure statement:

Qualified on the content I am responsible for because: I have expertise in qualitative methods on federally funded grants in collaboration with occupational health researchers and epidemiologists in the field of work organization and health outcomes.

Any relevant financial relationships? No

I agree to comply with the American Public Health Association Conflict of Interest and Commercial Support Guidelines, and to disclose to the participants any off-label or experimental uses of a commercial product or service discussed in my presentation.

Back to: **4412.0:** [Caring for Those Who Take Care of Us: Firefighter and Police Officer Health](#)

800 I Street, NW Washington, DC 20001-3710 (Ph) 202-777-APHA (Fax) 202-777-2534

2011 © American Public Health Association