Familial Resemblance in Body Mass Index, Physical Activity and Diet in Tongan-Americans

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In the United States there has been little research available on the body mass index, physical activity, and dietary consumption among Tongan-Americans. Little is known about whether predispositions towards obesity and associated co-morbidities are established by the environment, or if there is a familial component. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to determine whether body mass index, physical activity, and caloric intake vary between, rather than within, father-son and mother-daughter pairs. A secondary purpose is to identify commonly consumed foods within the culture and physical activities, and finally to create theoretically-based, culturally sensitive, and socially supportive intervention strategies for weight loss and for the promotion of healthy diet and physical activity in overweight Tongan-Americans.

Currently, we are collecting data from father-son and mother-daughter pairs of Tongan-Americans. All participants are between the ages of 18-64, overweight or obese, and free of health problems that would inhibit ambulatory activities. Participants completed a short demographic questionnaire, physical activity questionnaire, and a dietary questionnaire. Participants waist and hips were measured and then their height and weight were assessed. Participants received an Actigraph accelerometer, which they wore for 7 days. Additionally, some of these participants will be randomly chosen to partake in interviews, where they will discuss and identify commonly consumed foods and physical activities as well as theoretically-based intervention strategies. Data collection is currently in progress. Through this study, researchers will be given a greater understanding of the health of Tongans living in the United States.