

Healthy Hearts Program Impact Study

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Abstract

Background/Purpose: Healthy Hearts Club (HHC) elementary aged education program is a population based in-school program offered by the Poudre Valley Health System (PVHS). The program is aimed at reducing a child's risk for CVD, through education and empowerment. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the HHC program on knowledge and behaviors related to CVD risk in two classrooms over a 6 month period.

Methods: The HHC is currently offered to 4th graders in six Northern Colorado school districts. The program includes a three lesson education unit, health behavior survey and objective measures of total cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, blood pressure, height and weight. Two classrooms (N=39 intervention group; N=40 control; both schools = ~ 80% white, 11% Hispanic) located in two schools in Thompson School District participated in this randomized intervention study. The intervention classroom received the full education program while the control classroom received no intervention. The control and intervention school completed the knowledge test and health behavior survey at baseline, 1 week, 3 and 6 months post-participation. Independent t-tests and a 2 X 4 repeated measures ANOVA were used to analyze the data.

Results: At baseline the two classrooms were similar for gender, number of ideal health behaviors and self-reported health; the control school scored significantly better on the baseline knowledge test. Knowledge significantly improved in the intervention school relative to the control school and this gain remained significantly higher at 1 week, 3 months and 6 months. Number of ideal behaviors obtained also improved over the four time points with more ideal behaviors obtained in the intervention school 1 week and 3 months after the intervention.

Implications: Northern Colorado children may benefit from implementing the HHC to all 4th and 5th grade classroom as a standard part of their Health and Wellness curriculum.