

**Epidemiology/Genetics Abstracts**

**Title:** FOLIC ACID AWARENESS AND REASONS FOR/NOT HAVING A DAILY INTAKE IN WOMEN AND MEN OF CHILDBEARING AGE

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**Background:** Fortification of folic acid in breads and cereals to prevent birth defects may not be an effective public health initiative for individuals consuming a traditional Hispanic or Asian diet. A state-wide awareness project was lead by a partnership between the Connecticut Spina Bifida Association (SBAC) and a University of Connecticut Health Center researcher. Various venues and strategies were chosen to reach individuals of childbearing age with outreach targeted to youth, Hispanic, Asian and immigrant communities.

**Method:** Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methods included: 1) revitalization of the disbanded CT Folic Acid Task Force, 2) teaching and utilizing nursing, medical, and high school/college students for outreach, 3) community-based focus groups to identify strategies, and 4) implementation of a descriptive study and community survey on knowledge of spina bifida, folic acid, and reasons for taking daily vitamin supplements. Grants to conduct the awareness and research were awarded from the SBA and Pfizer. Men were added to the study following new information in the literature that folate intake may improve the quality of sperm.

**Results:** Currently, surveys and education were conducted at 7 campus/cultural/community health events. A convenience sample of 352: 251 women (mean age 25.5) and 101 men (mean age 30.2); 70% born in the USA; 44 % White, 10 % Black/AA, 20 % Hispanic, and 25 % Asian; 74% have not had children. Only 36% took daily vitamins primarily for general health. No men and only 6 women (1.7%) took vitamins/folate to prevent birth defects. Multi-variate analysis and predictors of knowledge and potential adherence (VAS) will be shared after the study is completed in December 2008.

**Conclusion:** Many women and men remain unaware of spina bifida and the benefits of daily folic acid most believing their diet is adequate, however participants were interested in the education materials (SBA & CDC) and availability of free multivitamins.

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