In 1985, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) launched a ten-year longitudinal study, “National Growth and Health Study”, to compare differences in health markers between African American and white preadolescence girls. The objective of this study was to determine if there were racial differences in the children’s nutrient intake, physical activity, lipids, anthropometric measurements, and psychosocial factors.

From 1987 to 1996, researchers collected data from approximately 2,500 African American and white girls. The girls were recruited from 3 geographic areas: Richmond, CA, Cincinnati, OH, and Washington, DC. In February of 2009, researchers at UC San Francisco and Berkeley launched a follow-up pilot study “Intergenerational Transmission of Obesity: The Role of Life Stress” (ITB). Using the original cohort from Richmond, a random selection of fifty NGHS participants (now adult women) were selected and contacted.

The pilot study was conducted in a two part study:
- The first part of the study consists of questions being administered to the adult women of NGHS via telephone.
- The second part the study will consist of anthropometric measurements being taken of the NGHS family.

The aims of this study were:
- Determine if stress predicts non-homeostatic eating (emotional eating), which in turn predict dietary patterns, weight change, and abdominal fat distribution among the women.
- Determine if life stress among mothers is associated with the weight status of their children.

Researchers predict that low socioeconomic status and high stress exposure will lead to non-homeostatic eating. Non-homeostatic eating will in turn lead to eating in the absence of hunger and therefore, weight gain in mothers and possibly their offspring. UCSF and UC Berkeley are conducting this small pilot study to for the purposes of gathering preliminary data to propose conducting a larger study in the future.

My Specific Aim

The aim of my analysis of the data from this study were to:

- Determine if feeling depressed, anxious or guilty about food was related to non-homeostatic eating (emotional eating).

I hypothesized the women who were depressed or anxious about food the food they ate were more likely to be ‘emotional eaters’ than women not depressed or anxious about food.

Study Hypothesis

- Women and their offspring with greater stress exposure will have higher rates of non-homeostastic eating (emotional eating) and increased calorie consumption, and experience greater weight gain over time.

Methodology

Women were contacted and interviewed by phone.

Data was recorded on paper interview forms using questionnaires previously used and validated in other studies.

EPIData was used to enter and verify the data. EPIData is a free data entry and documentation program used widely by survey researchers.

Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to analyze the data and produce frequencies and means. SAS is a widely used software program used to analyze survey data.

For the purpose of this project only a small subset of the ITB questionnaire was analyzed.

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