Understanding Healthy Food Options in Charlotte, NC Corner Stores
Ashley Banks, MPH; Maren Coffman, PhD, RN; Laurie Crookenden, RN; Jainmary Jose, MS-C; Karina Gonzalez, RD, LDN; Danielle Gilliard, MPH; Elliott Royal, MA; Patrick Baron, PhD

Background
- Populations living in low-income areas typically have less access to grocery stores and healthy food options, which can lead to poor eating habits.
- Often, these areas are disproportionately inhabited by minorities, leading to greater health disparities.
- Many in these areas rely on corner stores for food purchase.
- Previous research in a rural, southern county showed that some store owners were willing to stock fresh fruits and vegetables, and store customers were often willing to purchase them.¹
- Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) has been working with 7 stores to pilot the “Healthy Corner Store” initiative.

Methods
- 200 corner stores were identified by MCPH and 7 stores were identified as ready and willing to be “Healthy Corner Stores”, working with MCPH to improve healthy food access and/or consumption.
- Data collection began in February 2018 and is ongoing.
- Students collect data from stores using a store owner/manager survey, customer survey, and an audit tool at stores, including the “Healthy Corner Stores”, to determine differences, receptivity to healthy food choices, and potential for future interventions.
- The audit tool is adapted from research conducted in Baltimore, Maryland, and includes a scoring mechanism for ranking stores based on availability of healthy foods.

Preliminary Results
- 39 stores are included in this preliminary analysis
- Store owner/manager surveys reveal that top selling items are often alcohol and cigarettes, rather than the foods that are offered.
- Customer surveys reveal water is often the healthiest option available for purchase, and that customers would purchase healthy foods if they were available.

Geographic Area

Next Steps
- The current study lays groundwork for understanding current food access at corner stores in the priority zip codes.
- Focus groups with customers from several of the “Healthy Corner Stores” will help determine how changes in these locations have impacted customer attitudes toward shopping at healthy corner stores and customer and owner/manager attitudes toward healthy food availability.
- Interviews with stakeholders from the priority area zip codes will occur to help identify supports and community capacity for increasing access to and consumption of healthy foods.

References

Goals
1. Identify the range of foods and products sold at corner stores in 6 county-defined “priority area” zip codes
2. Identify corner stores willing to provide healthier food choices for their customers, and
3. Examine customer knowledge of healthy foods and the desire to have access to healthier food choices.