Barriers and Facilitators to Children’s Active Transportation to and from School from the Perspectives of Practitioners

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Children and youth require at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily (CSEP, 2011)

Health benefits include:
- healthier growth and development,
- maintenance of a healthy body weight and BP,
- promotion of a positive psychological well-being

31% of Canadian children and youth met these recommendations (CFLRI, 2009)
Active Transportation to and from School (ATS)

- Children and youth that use ATS were more physically active than passive commuters (Faulkner et al., 2009)

- ATS is associated with improved CV fitness and a favorable BMI (Pabayo et al., 2010; Rosenberg et al., 2006)

- ATS is one method of increasing physically active levels
Theoretical Framework – Social Ecological Model

(Fleury & Lee, 2006; McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2006)
Purpose

- Identify **barriers and facilitators** to ATS for children and youth
  - from the perspective of practitioners who promote ATS in their professions
  - using an ecological model to discuss the findings
Participants

- 3 focus group sessions (3 communities)
- 19 practitioners (9 men, 10 women)
  - Health promoters, school safety coordinators, traffic engineers, police officers, urban planners, college instructor, etc.
Procedures

• A series of questions were developed in advance
  - Awareness, involvement, facilitators, barriers, etc.
• Focus group sessions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim
• A qualitative descriptive analytical approach was used to identify categories
• Thick description of the data was provided to convey the meaning and context of participants’ responses
Results / Discussion

- Intrapersonal
  - Traffic safety (ATS self-efficacy)
Results / Discussion

• Interpersonal barriers
  ▪ Social support
  ▪ Social norms (family lifestyle)
    • Culture of convenience
    • Fear of abduction
    • “Stranger danger”
Discussion – cont.

• Organizational barriers
  ▪ Lack of resources
  ▪ School’s ability to devote time to ATS programs

• Organizational facilitators
  ▪ Collaboration
    • Schools, law enforcement, health promotion, transportation, traffic safety, community development, parents, and students
  ▪ Leadership within organization
    • Champion
    • Access to supports and resources for ATS
Discussion – cont.

- Physical Environmental Barriers
  - Travel distance (school sprawl)
  - Weather
  - Daylight (dark winter mornings)

- Physical Environmental Facilitators
  - Traffic calming techniques
    - controlled intersections
    - direct routes to school
    - reduced speed limits
    - speed bumps
Recommendations

• Improve perceptions of child safety
• Develop collaborative relationships across organizations, communities, businesses and families
• Develop curriculum that supports active transportation
Limitations / Future directions

- Perspective of practitioners
- Schools not included in focus groups
- Triangulate data from practitioners with data from schools, parents and students
- ATS may be a better strategy for reducing sedentary time than increasing PA
Thank you!

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