The information environment as a social determinant of health: 
Implications for health disparities and opportunities for intervention

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Milestones
1988 — Authorized by California legislature
2004 — Opened for graduate students
2005 — Opened for undergraduate students

Schools
Social Sciences, Humanities, & Arts
Natural Sciences
Engineering
Management (planned)
Medicine/Human Health (planned)

Quick Stats – Fall 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UG Students</td>
<td>7,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladder-rank faculty</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
California’s San Joaquin Valley

The Salad Bowl of America

Most prolific agricultural region in the US
- 25.5 million acres farming & ranching
- All 8 counties top producers in CA
- Leading crops – fruits, nuts, vegetables

“Appalachia of the West”
High burden of preventable chronic disease
The Ecological Model

Levels of influence on health

Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991
Communication is a social determinant of health
Lack of access to health information is a problem
Information Deserts
Mapping the Health Information Environment in Merced County

14 Newspapers

570 health related articles in 6 mos

1 in 18 published stories

1 Bilingual Spanish/English

## Top 6 Health Topics in Merced County News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Illustrative Headlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Care/Policy</strong></td>
<td>• “New deadline looms for Valley Medi-Cal – Rush is to sign up by April 15”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nutrition &amp; Diet</strong></td>
<td>• “Legislature should put warning on sugary soda”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infectious Disease</strong></td>
<td>• “West Nile virus detected in Stanislaus County”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preventive Health</strong></td>
<td>• “Stay hydrated when working out in heat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cancer</strong></td>
<td>• “Baseball must snuff out the use of tobacco”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Activity</strong></td>
<td>• “ASSETS [after-school care] boosts studies, exercise”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weak Communication Infrastructure as a Barrier to Health
People look for health information from the media

- Despite unequal public information environments
- Latinos disproportionately trust and rely on media for health information
But TOO MUCH information is also bad for health!
Today's Random Medical News

According to a report released today....
What can be done?

Communication intervention from an ecological perspective
Individual Level: Health education

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrpR1LI68Rs&app=desktop
Strengthening the communication infrastructure
A case study in Merced County
Multilevel communication to improve public health
Partnerships to Improve Community Health

- **Physical Activity**: Increasing safe, affordable access.
- **Food**: Increasing access to healthy foods.
- **Tobacco**: Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke & marketing.
- **Community-Clinical Linkages**: Health Information Exchange and Community Health Workers.

**COMMUNICATION**
- Strategic News Media Engagement
- Partnership Building
- Media Campaign

**A CULTURE OF HEALTH**
TO REDUCE THE BURDEN OF CHRONIC DISEASE
Support for policies and systems that make Merced a healthy place to live and work.
COMMUNICATION TO CREATE A CULTURE OF HEALTH

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

- Share successes, challenges
- Trained Spokespersons
- Amplify key messages

Support for policies and systems that make Merced a healthy place to live and work.
COMMUNICATION TO CREATE A CULTURE OF HEALTH

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

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STATEGIC NEWS MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- Earned media
- Cultivate relationships

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COMMUNICATION TO CREATE A CULTURE OF HEALTH

STRATEGIC NEWS MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

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PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

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MEDIA CAMPAIGN

- Unified branding
- Social norms
- Knowledge

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Support for policies and systems that make Merced a healthy place to live and work.
Thank you!

Community Partners

Funders

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