Author's response to reviews

Title: Overweight and Obesity, Physical Activity, and Factors in the Urban Environment: Identifying Gaps in Research

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Version: Date: 19 July 2006

Author's response to reviews:

Dear editors:

We thank the reviewers for their comments on the article. Our underlying assumptions were that research on the urban built environment as well as remediation of issues affecting these communities need to include residents at every stage of planning, design, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, efforts to improve neighborhoods must transcend traditional public health practice to include the expertise of other disciplines. Most of the comments emphasized the need to make these assumptions more explicit. We have done this primarily in the conclusion section of the article. Specific comments, and responses include:

Dr. Corburn

1. Scale: How should researchers define the geographic, temporal or other parameters of neighborhood? We agree that how neighborhoods are defined dramatically impact research and underpin efforts to change neighborhood form. Individual concepts of neighborhood are fluid and communities themselves may define themselves in multiple ways and in manners that do not conform to outside researchers' definitions. This issues deserve a greater depth of discussion than space allows here (we are currently planning to write a separate paper covering this issue). We have included language in the conclusions section alerting researchers of the need to explicitly how they have defined and delineated the neighborhoods used in their study.

2. Public involvement and community based participatory research. Community-based participatory research principles have helped guide the development of this paper. We agree that they should be included in this manuscript and a paragraph very briefly summarizing some of the principles have been included in the conclusions section.

3. How can different scales be included into research? Dr. Corburn correctly points out that scale is an important consideration in understanding neighborhood effects on health. We included language in the conclusions briefly bringing up this issue.

Dr. Kelly

1. Discuss the structure of the paper early on in the introduction. We have included a paragraph outlining the structure of the paper.

2. Redundant text. Changes have been made eliminating the redundancy.

3. Recommendations should include the need for collaborations with other disciplines. We agree with this suggestion and have included this in a new part of the conclusions on how to conduct more effective research on the urban environment.

4. Need to explicitly state the need for community involvement. We have included language on community based participatory research.

In addition, we have reformatted the article to make it better comply with manuscript submission requirements and the editorial suggestions communicated to us.

Thank you for your time on this.

Sincerely,

Russ Lopez