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**Menu Labeling Increases Awareness and Use of Calorie Information in Seattle**

*Study Reveals Proportion of Consumers Seeing and Using Calorie Information Tripled after Implementation of Menu-Labeling Regulation in Seattle area*

**(Princeton, N.J.) January 20, 2015 –** A new study finds that the percentage of adults in the Seattle area who saw and used calorie information tripled after a menu-labeling policy went into effect for chain restaurants, and that the results were sustained up to 24 months.These findings come less than two months after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced rules requiring calorie information be posted on menus in chain restaurants and other retail food venues nationwide. The study was published online today by the *American Journal of Public Health.*

King County, Wash., which includes Seattle, implemented a menu-labeling policy at the beginning of 2009. Some restaurant chains already had begun to voluntarily display calorie information before then. Survey results show that in mid-2008, 8.1 percent of residents saw and used the voluntarily posted calorie information. By the end of 2010, 24.8 percent were seeing and using the required information. This study’s follow-up period post-policy implementation is the longest of any study to date. The most dramatic increase in awareness and use of calorie information occurred over the course of the first year of implementation and the growth was maintained throughout the second year. However, it took a full year after implementation to see the complete effects of the labeling changes. The study was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) through its Healthy Eating Research program.

Customer awareness and usage of calorie information increased across all demographics, but there were some differences among the subgroups of survey respondents. White, higher-income, and obese consumers were more likely to see the calorie information; and women, higher-income respondents, and customers who ate at fast-food vs. sit-down chain restaurants were more likely to use this information.

“Menu labeling can impact consumer behavior. Posting calorie counts increases the percentage of people who see and use that information,” said Roxana Chen, social research scientist, Public Health - Seattle & King County and lead study author. “The next step is to ensure that all populations are equally aware of and able to use this information.”

The study relied on data from the 2008-2010 Washington State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. From these data, 3,132 King County adult residents who reported eating at a chain restaurant regulated by the menu-labeling policy comprised the study population. Researchers measured awareness (i.e., seeing calorie information) and usage (i.e., using calorie information to inform menu selection) over a period of more than two years, from 8 months before the policy implementation to 24 months afterwards.

This study builds on the results of a related study, also funded by RWJF, that was published in 2013. In the earlier work, the researchers examined the impact of King County’s menu-labeling policy on calories purchased from a select group of chain restaurants, and they found that adults and teens who used the menu-labeling information purchased up to 143 fewer calories than customers who did not see or use the calorie information.

King County was the second jurisdiction in the nation—after New York City—to implement a menu-labeling law. The King County policy covered any food establishment with 15 or more locations nationwide. The two menu-labeling rules recently finalized by the FDA will apply to a variety of retail food venues with 20 or more locations nationwide, including sit-down and fast-food restaurants, vending machines, convenience stores and movie theaters.

**About Healthy Eating Research**

Healthy Eating Research is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The program supports research on environmental and policy strategies with strong potential to promote healthy eating among children to prevent obesity, especially among lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk for obesity. For more information, visit [www.healthyeatingresearch.org](http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org).

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