Abstract – Assessing communication methods among Gainesville community members

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BACKGROUND. Behavior change is not possible without health educators and public health professionals being able to access the correct communication channels. With today’s populations’ media usage changing with new technologies, public health workers also need to change how they are contacting populations in order to most effectively and efficiently reach them. The aim of this analysis is to investigate which form of media members of the Alachua County community have access to in order to discover which form should be used to get health messages to them.

METHODS. HealthStreet data (Cottler, LB PI) from November 2011 to March 2012 was analyzed. Data was collected through the Community Health Worker Model; community members were approached and interviewed by Community Health Workers. Questions included demographics, communication access questions (if participant had a home phone, cell phone, email address, or used text messaging or Twitter), and whether the participant had enough money to feed their family in the last twelve months which was used to gauge poverty.

RESULTS. There was a significant difference in the negative association of older ages of participants across potential communication variables: cell phone, email address, text messaging use, and Twitter use. Positive associations were seen with increased Twitter, cell phone use, text messaging use, and email address and an increase in education. Positive associations were seen with increased Twitter, text messaging use, and email address and an increase in income. Logistic regression showed that participants had lower odds of having Twitter, text messaging, and email with lower education and older age.

CONCLUSION. Participants who are younger, had more education, and were not considered to be in poverty had higher odds of having a cell phone, email address, using text messaging and Twitter. Older people were more likely to have a home phone. As technology increases, public health workers need to take advantage of new ways to access populations in order to reach the most people in the shortest amount of time, thus increasing efficiency.