

Utility and Feasibility of a Rapid Assessment Tool for Small Area Health Needs in a Metropolitan Canadian Context

H. Gibson-Wood, A.M. Jabbar, M. Zangeneh, J.R. Dunn

Routinely collected data sources lack adequate information on neighbourhood level health outcomes. Such data would be particularly useful for regionalized health authorities to identify small-area health needs. This study developed and pilot tested a rapid assessment tool for small-area health needs to assess health status and health needs in four low-income Toronto neighbourhoods (Eglinton East, North St. Jamestown, South Parkdale, and Weston-Mt. Denis).

The survey was primarily derived from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and other valid Canadian health questionnaires. Respondents were randomly selected and completed a face-to-face interview between August 2007 and March 2008. Associations between three health outcome variables (self rated health status (SRHS), frequency of alcohol intake, and time since last dentist visit) by low-income neighbourhood (LIN) were examined. Frequencies of the health outcome variables were also compared to CCHS data. Sample size included a total of 785 residents.

Results yield significant neighbourhood differences in frequency of alcohol intake and time since last dental visit. Health outcomes were poorer among the LINs in comparison to CCHS data, most notably, among those who drink alcohol. Findings demonstrate the utility and necessity of neighbourhood level survey methods in assessing health status and health needs in a Canadian metropolitan setting. With appropriate implementation, the methodology may provide critical data for healthcare decision-makers.