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**Preliminary Analysis of Restaurant Response to the First U.S. Toy Giveaway Ordinance Shows Promising Results**

**Washington, DC** - Wondering if the recent legislation banning toys from unhealthy children's happy meals will make a difference? New research suggests yes.

A preliminary analysis of restaurant response to the first U.S. toy giveaway ordinance showed improvements in nutritional guidance, toy marketing and distribution, and promotion of healthy meals, beverages, and side items aimed at children in restaurants affected by the ordinance. The affected restaurants identified and more vigorously promoted meals and items meeting ordinance nutritional criteria, removed toy posters and signage, and separated the sales of toys from children's meals. Minimal change was observed at the unaffected restaurants.

The Santa Clara County toy giveaway ordinance, implemented on August, 9, 2010, and affecting restaurants in the unincorporated regions of the County, prohibits the distribution of toys and other incentives to children in conjunction with meals, foods, or beverages that fail to meet minimal nutrition criteria as drawn from the 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommendations.

The analysis, being presented today at the Society of Behavioral Medicine's 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting and Scientific Sessions in Washington, DC, reports on response of national chain fast food restaurants affected by the landmark ordinance relative to unaffected, same-chain restaurants in the area.

"There was a range of ways the restaurants could have responded to comply with the ordinance, such as introducing more healthful menu options, reformulating current menu items, or changing marketing or toy distribution practices. We wanted to follow and document their reactions," says Jennifer Otten, PhD, postdoctoral scholar at the Stanford Prevention Research Center and lead author of the study.

Extensive research shows that consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods – the type at fast food restaurants paired with toys – contributes to obesity. Ken Yeager, President of the Board of Supervisors of Santa Clara County and the law's author, has been quoted in the news as saying he hopes the ordinance breaks the link between unhealthy food and prizes. A similar ordinance has passed in San Francisco County and others have been introduced in Nebraska, Wisconsin, Florida, and, most recently, New York City.

This study measured changes in children's menu items and child-directed marketing and toy distribution practices before and after implementation of the ordinance at affected restaurants and compared them with unaffected restaurants.

“Our preliminary results show the restaurants are responding in positive ways to the ordinance,” says Otten. “We don’t yet know if these changes will translate into changes in consumer eating behavior. We will be analyzing over 600 parent surveys that we collected at these specific chains to take a preliminary look at this.”

The study is funded by grants from The Obesity Society and Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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*This study was presented during the 2011 Annual Meeting and Scientific Session of the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) from April 27 – 30 in Washington, DC. However, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of the SBM.*

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