Promoting Healthy Fish Consumption Messaging among Hmong Women:
Focus Group Summary & Key Takeaways

Full report and manuscript forthcoming

In a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through MDH, HealthPartners created the ChooseYourFish initiative, focused on women who are or could become pregnant, to promote safe fish consumption and ultimately improve fetal developmental outcomes. HealthPartners held a series of focus groups in April 2019 to understand how Hmong women who are or could become pregnant prefer to receive fish consumption messages. These focus groups were designed to gather useful information for two key stakeholders: the HealthPartners digital promotions team and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Ultimately, 13 women participated across three focus groups. High-level results and takeaways related to each of our three aims follow.

Aim 1: What are some ways to engage the Hmong community with the safe fish consumption message?

- Most participants identified the Internet as the primary source of health information, with the search engine Google most commonly used. Other websites included YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Netflix. An online presence is important to reach this demographic.
- Friends and family, especially those employed in healthcare were noted as sources of health information. Additionally, because online information is often shared amongst families, making the information more general (i.e. not specific to pregnancy) may increase likelihood that it is shared.
- Online healthcare websites were mentioned as common, credible, and often-used. Healthcare providers were mentioned as well. Branding with a credible source could be helpful in reaching this group of women.

Aim 2: What type of fish consumption messaging will resonate best with women in the Hmong community?

- Women gave feedback on Facebook ads with four different photos, as well as a Hmong-specific fish information card and the ChooseYourFish brochure. Feedback on the ads was mixed, though most women noted the importance of alignment between images and messages.
- It was important that images and messages directly targeted the intended audience (Hmong women) and not just Asian women generally.
- Simple messaging was preferred, both generally and for ease of translation.

Aim 3: What knowledge, behaviors, and beliefs about fish consumption exist among the Hmong population?

- Generally, women stated that their knowledge about specific fish consumption guidelines was low. However, in one focus group women relayed knowledge that raw fish and sushi should not be eaten while pregnant and in another Mercury was mentioned as harmful. This points to the need to continue promoting the safe fish consumption message to this population.
- Women commented about the lack of differentiation between fish species. This idea may require additional clarification that the differences between species are important for health.
- Some women in the focus groups disliked fish, in part because of the smell, the bones, and/or the “gaminess”. The message for these women should continue to promote the benefits of low-mercury fish.

As a whole, this qualitative exploration into Hmong women’s preferences in receiving fish consumption messages has resulted in rich findings that will help ChooseYourFish and the Minnesota Department of Health tailor messages to better support the Hmong community in MN as it relates to healthy fish consumption and fetal development.