

Hydration and cooling practices among farmworkers at risk for heat-related illness in Oregon and Washington

AUTHOR(S): Jeffrey Bethel, PhD

PRESENTATION FORMAT: Oral Presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Prevention of heat-related illness among farmworkers in the Pacific Northwest

ABSTRACT:

Background: Although recommendations for preventing occupational heat-related illness among farmworkers include hydration and cooling practices, the extent to which these recommendations are universally practiced is unknown. The objective of the analysis was to compare hydration and cooling practices between farmworkers in Oregon and Washington.

Methods: A survey was administered to a purposive sample of Oregon and Washington farmworkers. Data collected included demographics, work history and current work practices, hydration practices, access and use of cooling measures, and headwear and clothing worn.

Results: Overall, 197 participants' responses were included in the analyses (100 in Oregon and 97 in Washington). Oregon farmworkers were more likely than those in Washington to consume beverages containing sugar and/or caffeine. Workers in Oregon more frequently reported using various cooling measures compared to workers in Washington. Availability of cooling measures also varied between the two states.

Conclusions: These results highlight the large variability between workers in two states regarding access to and use of methods to stay cool while working in the heat. Basic hydration and cooling recommendations appear to be practiced to varying degrees, and differences may reflect differences in work and work environments.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Identify methods to prevent heat-related illness among farmworkers
- Identify the differences in hydration and cooling practices between farmworkers in Oregon and Washington

PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Jeffrey Bethel, PhD

Assistant Professor

Oregon State University, College of Public Health & Human Sciences

Corvallis, OR

541-737-3832 | jeff.bethel@oregonstate.edu