Introduction

- The campus environment can largely shape the health status of college students.
- Students are at a time of high-stress and may develop coping mechanisms to deal with this stress, impacting health⁰⁴.
- Stress has been linked to poorer physical health and mental health².
- Stress may cause unhealthy eating and worsen mental health³.
- Resources available to students to deal with stress may impact their coping behaviors and mental health⁴.

Objective

- To investigate students’ perceptions of their campus stress resources, effects of stress on eating, and mental health.

Methods

- A survey was distributed to students at a large, Appalachian university via email.
- Students were asked about:
  - Perceptions of campus resources for stress using a 5-point Likert Scale
  - Mental health support using a 5-point Likert Scale
  - Mental health symptoms over the past 30 days
  - Response frequencies and Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to determine the significance of a relationship between perceptions and mental health symptoms.
- Responses (n=1956) found that:
  - 49% of students agreed that there are stress resources on campus,
  - 52% agreed that there are stress management programs available
  - 38% agreed that it is difficult to eat healthy because of stress at school
  - 45% agreed that they are able to make a mental health appointment if needed
  - 51% agreed that there is a support system available.

Table 1. Significant associations with number of poor mental health days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Perception of Stress Resources</th>
<th>Stress Management Programs</th>
<th>Mental Health Appointment Access</th>
<th>Presence of a Support System</th>
<th>Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
<td>0.0103</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Significant associations with number of days with depression symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Perception of Stress Resources</th>
<th>Stress Management Programs</th>
<th>Mental Health Appointment Access</th>
<th>Presence of a Support System</th>
<th>Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
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<td>0.0061</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Significant associations with number of days with anxiety symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Perception of Stress Resources</th>
<th>Stress Management Programs</th>
<th>Mental Health Appointment Access</th>
<th>Presence of a Support System</th>
<th>Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

- On average, students report feeling:
  - anxious for almost half of the days each month.
  - depression almost one third of the days of each month.
- There is a significant association between experience of mental health symptoms and perceptions of stress resources, stress management programs, mental health appointment access, presence of a support system, and difficulty eating healthy due to stress.
- Interventions targeting stress management may improve mental health and healthy eating.

Works Cited