

Multi-Sensory Interventions to Improve Health and Nutrition Literacy and its Outcomes in Caribbean Youth Specific Populations

Presented By: Dr. Mercedes Harris, PharmD, MPH

Introduction

Within the Caribbean, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of premature adult deaths. NCDs perpetuate a significant impact on economies, health systems and patient quality of life particularly in developing countries. As a result, innovative strategies that are low barrier, feasible and adaptable are needed to improve health literacy outcomes. Expanding the versatility of public health personnel and utilizing the accessibility of a pharmacist. These methods can be utilized to help influence positive, behavioral life skills and health decisions.

Results

The program consisted of 25 (8-9 year old) students (16 males and 9 females). Four weekly assessment questionnaires were given with questions covering the previous week's lesson. From baseline to final assessment there was a 76% improvement in students' literacy rate including health and nutrition education retention.

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Design

Health education in combination with nutrition literacy programs, mainly culinary nutrition teaching kitchen (TK) environments were employed in a primary (elementary) school within the Caribbean. The multi-sensory student led cooking pilot program targeted primary school aged youth over a four week period. The once weekly class consisted of elements of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programming to reinforce health and nutrition literacy concepts (i.e. the healthy eating plate, low cost/healthy food choice selections-colorful plate, culturally sensitive food pyramid explanation) and application to positive behavioral and academic changes.

Conclusion

Expanding teaching kitchen programs within education institutions and across the wider public health community particularly for underserved and resourced populations can be a viable method to improve the public's health literacy and health care utilization markers.

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