Impact of a high school mentoring program on nutritional knowledge and healthy habits of elementary school students

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Objective: To examine if a multidimensional nutrition education program with teenage mentors is effective in increasing knowledge and changing attitudes and behaviors of elementary school children.

Design: Pretest-posttest design.

Setting: After-school program at San Miguel Elementary School in Sunnyvale, CA.

Participants: Seven mentors from Fremont High School and 15 4th and 5th grade students participated in the intervention. Students were chosen based on attendance in an after-school program and parental consent.

Intervention: An 8-week Social Cognitive Theory-based curriculum including seminars, snack making and physical activity for 1 hour/week.

Variables Measured: Nutritional knowledge, attitude, and healthy behaviors.

Analysis: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the effect of the intervention on knowledge changes, and chi-square test of independence assessed changes in attitudes and behaviors.

Results: Overall knowledge changed significantly for both students and mentors (F(1,20) = 23.50, P < .001), but knowledge changes varied for specific nutrition topics. No significant change in attitude or behavior was noted.

Conclusions and Implications: This intervention was effective in increasing knowledge, but not attitudes or behaviors. Longer-duration interventions, with increased mentor-student interaction, may be needed to promote significant attitude and behavioral changes.

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Improving Food Choices and Nutrient Adequacy in Adolescents/Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities

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Learning Outcome: Participants will be able to identify educational strategies that are most effective in meeting the social, cognitive, and dietary needs of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, assisting them in the development of programs.

There has been a dramatic increase over the past two decades in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States. Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) have higher incidences of overweight and obesity than the general population, and are currently under-served in health promotion programs. The purpose of the study, using a triangulation design, was to investigate if implementation of an appropriately planned nutrition program administered to young adults with ID/DD resulted in changes in food choices and specific nutrients that may be influential in preventing overweight and obesity, and to answer the research question: What educational strategies in providing nutrition education are most effective in meeting the social, cognitive, and dietary needs of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, assisting them in the development of programs.

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