



Nutrition Educators are Innovators. . . but it Takes Time



As we enter National Nutrition Month, nutrition educators are particularly hard at work teaching communities about and promoting healthy food choices and

physical activity behaviors. This is no easy task. One of the biggest challenges we face in this field is developing messages and materials that are easily translatable and transferrable to target audiences. We have nutrition educators working around the globe with communities representing all walks of life and using their expertise to develop and evaluate innovative approaches to meet these communities where they are in their health and nutrition journeys.

As I reflect on past JNEB issues, I am always amazed by the creativity and care of our nutrition educators in finding ways to improve the health and well-being of their unique communities. As an example, Buro et al¹ designed a nutrition education intervention for adolescents and youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), an underrepresented group in the nutrition literature. This 8-week virtual, theory-based intervention developed over 2 years was informed by adolescents and youth with ASD and their parents to ensure that messaging and activities were appropri-

ate. The pilot study not only showed improvements in sugar consumption but also other factors such as self-efficacy and behavioral strategies surrounding healthy eating.

Another way we innovate in nutrition education is through the development of culturally adapted approaches to help close the gap for ethnic and racial groups that face health disparities. Maafs-Rodríguez, Otis, and Mattei² found a way to successfully promote healthy eating for kids in the Latin American Spanish-speaking community through social media platforms, by adapting the Kid's Healthy Eating Plate. The cultural adaptation process included gaining feedback from native Spanish speaking professionals and community members to ensure that the materials were relevant and acceptable. Ultimately, findings showed that promotion of culturally appropriate nutrition education materials through internet channels earned active responses from the target audience.

These are just 2 of the many, many innovative nutrition education approaches developed by nutrition educators and published in JNEB. And while their successes are evident, the methods take time. It takes time to identify the best communication channels, time to gain input from target members of the community, time to consider multiple iterations of materials and messaging, time to

implement and time to evaluate effectiveness. Prioritizing time is one of the many things that we as a profession do so well. Given that long term, sustained healthy behavior change is what we aim for, appropriate time allocation is critical for success.

We are fortunate that JNEB offers so many options, including Research Articles and Briefs, Systematic Reviews, Great Educational Materials (GEMs), Perspectives, and Reports, to highlight the innovative work being done nationally and internationally. I encourage readers to get the word out and promote our journal to colleagues who are looking to publish their great work. Let's work together to widen our reach and increase our impact.

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REFERENCES

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