We are constantly working to promote the effectiveness of nutrition education for improving dietary quality and physical activity with the goal of positive health outcomes. This is no easy task. If improving knowledge alone about healthy diets was all it took to show how important nutrition education is, I think we can agree that we have done our jobs well. But our work extends beyond knowledge into behavior, which is influenced by so many other factors that add to the challenge of demonstrating the effectiveness of nutrition education. Behavior change models and theories like the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), Health Belief Model, Theory of Trying, Theory of Planned Behavior, Self Determination Theory, and many others tell us that there are numerous other influences that impact why we eat what we eat. Psychosocial correlates, sociodemographic and environmental factors such as culture, self-efficacy, history of successes and failures, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, autonomy, and competence all play important roles in food behaviors. But how do we measure these? How do we show that the work we do is impacting the constructs that play such an important role in how we make dietary behavior decisions?

At JNEB, we continue to highlight the development and evaluation of tools to do just this. Through conference proceedings and abstracts, and published papers, we continue to move the field forward and further our ability to show how nutrition education interventions work. For example, Chopra et al\(^1\) “developed and validated questionnaires to assess the behavioral, psychosocial, and environmental predictors of successful weight loss outcomes.” Through rigorous methodology, cross disciplinary examination of constructs and consideration of cultural influences, 3 new valid and reliable tools were developed: Behavioral Predictor Questionnaire, Psychosocial Predictors Questionnaire, and Environmental Predictors Questionnaire. Similarly, Flores-Vázquez et al\(^2\) developed a culturally appropriate tool for assessing dietary behavior among Spanish-speaking adolescents. This valid and reliable tool addresses SCT constructs as they relate to eating behavior among this understudied group. Both of these studies contribute to the important toolbox of resources needed to develop and assess tailored nutrition education interventions. Given the complexity and multifaceted nature of understanding nutrition-related behaviors, development and evaluation of appropriate measures are challenging and time consuming but needed.

Because of the importance of good tools to measure the effectiveness of nutrition education interventions, JNEB encourages the submission of these studies. We want to highlight the great work of our researchers and practitioners that has direct implications for how we understand dietary behaviors, use tools in either clinical or other research studies, and apply this work to inform policy development. To better guide in the review of this work, authors can refer to A Reviewer’s Guide for Appraising Questionnaire Methods Papers on the JNEB website.

Lauren Haldeman, PhD
Editor-in-Chief,
Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior,
Advancing Research, Practice, and Policy

REFERENCES