Baseline Characteristics of Adults in a Produce Prescription Program at a Federally Qualified Health Center in Hawaii

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Background: Produce Prescription (PRx) programs are an innovative approach to preventing nutrition-related chronic diseases among low-income populations. However, the literature is limited on the use of PRx interventions among Native Hawaiian populations. Baseline characteristics of PRx participants from a densely Native Hawaiian-populated community can provide insight on the need for nutrition programs and inform future program design.

Objective: To describe baseline demographics, food insecurity, Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19) impact on quality of life, self-perceived health, and fruit and vegetable (FV) intake among Waianae Ohana Produce Prescription (WOPRx) participants.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: A cross-sectional analysis was conducted using baseline data from the WOPRx program, where participants at Hawaii’s largest federally-qualified community health center receive $60/month for 18 months to purchase local produce from the health center’s farmers market.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: The 59-question interviewer-administered baseline survey measured demographics, food insecurity, COVID-19 impact on quality of life, self-perceived health, and FV intake.

Results: Of the 481 adults, 72% were females, and 65% were of Native Hawaiian ancestry. On average, participants were 53 ± 13.1 years old within a household size of 4 ± 2.8 people. A majority of households (68%) were Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most participants faced difficulties making ends meet (74%) and getting fresh FV (66%). The vast majority of participants reported eating the following less than one time per day in the past 30 days: fruit (79%), lettuce salad (89%), beans (98%), starchy vegetables (98%), other vegetables (86%), and tomato sauce (99%). Most participants self-reported their health as either poor (23%) or fair (44%).

Conclusion: Most participants reported negative impacts on their financial situation and access to fresh FV as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly all participants reported low FV intake and more than half felt their health was poor or fair. Future research should continue to measure these variables for changes across the intervention and ensure program components are in place to address these issues.

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Best Practices for Nutrition Education Among Low-Income Populations: A Narrative Review

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Background: Low-income populations often face barriers to participation in nutrition education programs (eg, transportation, childcare, mode of information delivery). Understanding strategies to promote participation and engagement is needed to ensure equitable access to nutrition education.

Objectives: The purpose of this narrative review was to identify effective nutrition education modalities and strategies for increasing program attendance when working with low-income populations.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: Searches were conducted in CINHAL, MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, and other library databases using the following key terms: ‘nutrition education’, ‘nutrition modalities’, ‘low-income’. Included studies were published between 1994 and 2022.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Seventeen studies were included in this review and thematic analysis was used to identify effective nutrition education modalities and attendance strategies.

Results: Tailoring nutrition education modalities to meet the needs of low-income populations was an effective strategy for increasing program participation. Participants preferred accessible and interactive education modalities, including visuals, in person classes, websites with recipes, hands-on activities, apps, text messaging, and written materials at an appropriate reading level. Strategies for increasing attendance included offering monetary incentives, accommodating childcare and transportation needs, using accessible community locations (eg, schools), and incorporating skills-based education (eg, gardening).

Conclusion: This narrative review highlights the importance of tailoring information delivery methods and attendance strategies to low-income populations. These findings will ultimately inform the development of more effective nutrition education programs.

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