Impact of a Virtual Interactive Cooking Class Series on Nutrition Behaviors of Parents of Young Children

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Background: The COVID-19 pandemic made efforts to provide nutrition education and increase utilization of healthy foods more difficult. Cooking Matters is a national program that provides cooking classes for low-income families to promote cooking skills and healthy eating.

Objective: To develop and implement a virtual nutrition education intervention to reach low-income parents of children aged 0-5 in Georgia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: The programming consisted of a 3-week cooking class series grounded in the Social Cognitive Theory and based on the Cooking Matters program curriculum. Classes were delivered virtually via Zoom once per week and focused on topics such as nutrition, cooking skills, child-engagement, grocery shopping, and budgeting. We enrolled 39 parents for the study, and 17 parents completed all three cooking classes in the series over the course of three weeks. A pre and post-test design was used to measure parents’ cooking knowledge and self-efficacy.

Measurable Outcomes/Analysis: A pre and post-test design was used to measure parents’ cooking knowledge and self-efficacy. Parent and child fruit and vegetable consumption was measured. Parent knowledge of the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as parent self-efficacy in purchasing and cooking healthy meals was measured using Wilcoxon and McNemar’s tests in SPSS Version 27.0.

Results: The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the cooking intervention yielded a statistically significant decrease (p=0.02) in the number of parents who reported consuming sugar sweetened beverages, significant increases in parent reported self-efficacy in purchasing food in season to save money (p=0.003), and an overall increase in parent self-efficacy (p=0.015).

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that adapting in-person cooking classes to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic is engaging for parents and children and is an effective way to promote nutrition education to low-income families.

Funding: Share Our Strength - Cooking Matters Program

Impact of FVRx Programs on Fruit and Vegetable Intake, Cardiovascular Risk Factors and Food Security: A Systematic Review

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Background: Produce prescription (FVRx) programs have been established to support the consumption of fruits and vegetables (FVs), particularly among individuals at risk for diet-related chronic disease or food insecurity, through referral by a healthcare provider. To date, published literature on prescription programs solely focused on FVs has not been synthesized.

Objective: To examine the impact of FVRx programs on FV intake, cardiovascular risk factors and food security in children and adults.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: A systematic review with searches across five databases were completed. All records were uploaded into Covidence, a systematic review management software. Duplicates were removed and selection of studies was determined based on review of title/abstract and subsequent review of full-text articles by two independent reviewers. Disagreements were resolved by consensus with a third reviewer. Eligibility criteria included studies published in the US, in English between August 2012-2022. Eligible studies had to include exposure to a FVRx program (enrolled participants with or at risk for a diet-related chronic disease or food insecurity, referral by a healthcare provider, and use of a monetary prescription redeemed at a farmers’ market or grocery store) and an outcome of FV intake, cardiovascular risk factors, and/or food security.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Reported outcome data was extracted from eligible articles and synthesized. Across studies, findings were summarized for each outcome.

Results: A total of 949 records were identified and 248 duplicates were removed. Of the 701 titles/abstracts reviewed, 47 were identified for full text review. Twenty studies were selected for inclusion. Fifteen studies reported FV intake, 12 analyzed changes and 7 studies found a significant increase in FV intake. Cardiovascular risk factors outcomes were reported for HbA1c (n=7), blood pressure (n=8) and cholesterol (n=2) with mixed findings. Of the 7 studies that reported food security outcomes, 4 ana-
Impactful Course Activities and Assignments and Suggested Improvements to Food Security-Focused Collegiate Curriculum

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Background: Providing comprehensive food insecurity education and training in higher education is critical for preparing nutrition, public health, and social work students to address this issue in their future careers. Not much is known about course activities that aim to prepare students to screen, monitor, and intervene upon food insecurity in their future careers.

Objective: To describe impactful food security-related course activities and to synthesize student suggestions to improve the training of future nutrition, public health, and social work professionals.

Study Design, Setting, and Participants: A cross-sectional 31-item questionnaire was completed by 306 undergraduate and graduate nutrition, public health, and social work students attending higher education institutions across the United States (n=13). This abstract summarizes two open-ended questions that captured current impactful course activities/assignments and student suggestions to improve college curricula.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Inductive thematic coding approach by two independent coders to analyze current course activities/assignments and student suggestions to improve college curricula.

Results: Class lecture and discussions about food insecurity topics were most frequently reported by students as impactful activities. Lectures or discussions that focused on defining food security and populations that are at greater risk for food insecurity were most impactful to students. Students suggested improving curricula by increasing awareness of food insecurity resources, building skills to assist populations with food insecurity, and enhancing current course curricula. High emphasis was placed on increasing application-based opportunities (eg, service-learning), skills training, awareness of community and campus food security resources, and coverage of food insecurity topics.

Conclusion: Impactful training to prepare students to assess and respond to food insecurity in individuals and communities is a public health need. Student respondents in this study suggest means of enhancing their food insecurity-related training, which may be used to develop a toolkit for instructors in related fields.

Funding: NIH

Implementing Policy, Systems, and Environmental Obesity Prevention Interventions in Rural Georgia: The High Obesity Program

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Objective: To evaluate the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) obesity prevention interventions in rural Georgia from 2016-2023 under The High Obesity Program (HOP).

Use of Theory or Research: Poor diet and sedentary behavior are significant risk factors for obesity. Guided by the Social Ecological Model, which identifies multiple levels that contribute to health behavior, HOP (CDC-DP18-1809) aims to improve individual nutrition and physical activity behavior through increased access to affordable healthy food, safe and convenient places to be physically active, and policies to support obesity prevention behaviors.

Target Audience: Citizens of five rural Georgia counties (Clay, Calhoun, Steward, Taliaferro, Dooly) with a high prevalence of adult obesity (>40%).

Program Description: HOP, known as Healthier Together (HT) in Georgia, works at the local level to implement evidence-based strategies and leverage partner resources to address obesity and its associated factors. Beginning in 2016, HT facilitated development of community coalitions, needs assessment and prioritization, intervention selection, implementation, and evaluation. Coalitions selected community gardens, healthy food pantries and coolers, sidewalk repair, walking trails, playground modifications, and active community design.

Evaluation Methods: Counts of interventions implemented and sustained, food pantry healthy standard implementation checklists, themes identified from qualitative project staff records (program and coalition meeting agendas, county activity reports), and annual progress reports were used to evaluate process and implementation outcomes.

Results: HT planned and implemented 22 community gardens, 8 coolers, and partnered with 7 food pantries. Of those, 72%, 50%, and 72% of gardens, coolers, and food pantries, respectively, are still active. No food pantries fully implemented healthy standards. HT repaired/enhanced 11 playgrounds; one is planned for 2023. Nine walking trails were installed; 8 are still accessible. Four

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