Program Description: During this 8-week program, an older adult partnered with a dietetic student instructor and met weekly for 45-minute nutrition education sessions. Each session covered a different food group and familiarized participants with the app. Older adults learned the importance of each food group, set 1-2 goals per week in the app, and learned tips for supporting these goals. Each week, participants received education handouts and a recipe card to apply their new learning at home.

Evaluation Methods: Older adults completed the dietary screening tool (DST), a 25-item validated questionnaire to assess dietary quality and nutrition risk in older adults, pre- and post-intervention and a satisfaction survey at the end of the study.

Results: All five participants completed the study with a 75% or greater attendance rate. Participants commented on their enjoyment of interacting with the student instructors and the MyPlate app’s simplicity. While some participants thought the study was positive overall, a few had trouble navigating the app and remembering to log their goals. At baseline, only one participant was not at nutrition risk (DST scores of 69.2±11.3), while post-intervention, four participants were not at nutrition risk (DST scores of 79.6±5.0).

Conclusion: This exploratory study was a successful starting point for introducing older adults to new technology and managing nutrition. The app was well received and had the potential to promote healthy dietary patterns, supporting the program’s continuation.

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SNEB Nutrition Educator Competencies: Nutrition Education Research Methods

A Closer Look at the Work of Nutrition Educators in Different Settings: Findings From an FDA Focus Group Study

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Background: Through consumer education initiatives, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) provides education on labeling and nutrition to the public to help them make healthy food choices. FDA disseminates education information broadly to the public and nutrition educators are key conduits to consumers for FDA education materials. Therefore, FDA wants to better understand nutrition educators and their communication needs.

Objective: To explore different nutrition educators’ work (populations they serve, how they interact with clients, topics they cover, materials they use, and challenges they face) and identify ways to further improve FDA’s communication with and support for them.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: Between August 2021 and July 2022, we conducted 24 online focus groups with U.S. nutrition educators (n=136): (1) educators working for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP); (2) educators working for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); (3) retail dietitians; (4) outpatient hospital dietitians; and (5) mixed categories of nutrition educators. Among them, 41% were registered dietitians, 90% had at least a bachelor’s degree, 93% were females, and 60% were White.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Transcripts were prepared from audio recordings. Deductive coding in NVivo12 was used to code the transcripts and identify salient themes within and across segments.

Results: While educators reported many commonalities (eg, serve a variety of populations, deliver education both in-person and online, use evidence-based materials from credible sources), there were also notable differences. For example, SNAP-Ed/EFNEP educators primarily interact with clients in groups while WIC educators mostly deliver one-on-one education. All educators highlighted the need for more materials in different languages, materials that are appropriate for low-literacy clients, culturally inclusive, and interactive. Educators reported challenges such as combating misinformation and switching from in-person to online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, FDA can further refine communication strategies and ways to support nutrition educators’ work, eg, updating FDA education materials and strengthening partnerships.

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Assessment of Food Establishments and Participation in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Urban University Setting

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Background: Food insecurity (FI) is associated with negative impacts on college students’ academics and health. FI can be mitigated by expanding food access by enrolling and using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, also known in California as the CalFresh Program. Assembly bills recently passed in California have focused on increasing college students’ access to CalFresh benefits. Additionally, other bills and campaigns have advocated for CalFresh Electronic Benefits Transfer (C-EBT) to be approved as payment on college campuses to combat increased FI among college students.

Objective: To assess community-level establishments in the form of markets, cafes, and restaurants and participation in CalFresh program which can impact the individual-level FI of college students in an urban campus setting using the Social Ecological Model framework.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: For this observational study, assessment was conducted on types of food establishments on campus and to evaluate retail participation in the CalFresh program on campus and within 0.5 miles of campus in an urban city in CA.

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