**Rush (continued)**

**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.

**Funding:** Internally Funded

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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**

Fanfan Wu, PhD, fanfan.wu@fda.hhs.gov, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Kathleen Yu, MPH, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Jenna Brophy, MPH, RTI International; Kristen Giombi, PhD, RTI International

**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.

**Funding:** U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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

Monique Scott, BA, San Francisco State University; Zubaida Qamar, PhD, RDN, QZ@SFSU.EDU, San Francisco State University

**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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Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to assess types of food establishments and retail participation in the CalFresh program.

Results: Food establishments (n=30) on campus and off-campus establishments that met the distance criteria were assigned to these categories: Cafes (36.7%), Markets (30.0%), and Restaurants (33.3%). In the Markets category, which included grocery stores, 20% accepted C-EBT where 3.3% were on-campus markets and 16.7% off-campus. None of the cafes and restaurants on campus accepted C-EBT. The two campus dining halls, included in the Restaurants sample, did not accept C-EBT card but distributed emergency meal plans to students in need.

Conclusion: Most food establishments on campus do not accept C-EBT card which suggests the need for campus markets to consider participation in the program to improve students’ food security. Future direction calls for programs focused on educating food vendors about the CalFresh Program, and how to apply to be a C-EBT retailer to improve food security for the campus community.

Funding: Health Equity Institute at San Francisco State University

Behavioral Barriers to the Use of a Smartphone App for Improving Diet Quality: Findings From a Qualitative Needs Assessment

Sara Henley, MPH, RD, sara.henley@opsishealth.com, Opis Health; Arielle Gorstein, MPH, ideas42; Andrew Berardy, PhD, Opis Health

Background: People trying to improve their diet quality and lose weight must navigate a complex, confusing food environment. While smartphone applications to support healthy eating and weight loss exist, they only track calories and macronutrients and don’t accurately identify healthy foods.

Objective: We sought to learn about barriers people face when trying to lose weight and improve their eating habits to inform development of a novel digital nutrition tracking and behavior change tool.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: This qualitative needs assessment consisted of thirty 45-minute, semi-structured virtual interviews with subjects aged 35-54 who had used a food tracking app or tried a diet trend in the past year. Participants were representative of the US population. Questions covered nutrition knowledge and information sources, and needs, preferences, and experiences surrounding weight loss and mobile applications. Participants’ compensation was $50.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Each interview included a leader, note taker, and observer from the research team. Notes were taken transcription style and manually coded using thematic analysis coding.

Results: While most interviewees correctly identified the components of a healthy diet, they shared barriers to consistently eating in a healthful way that resulted in lasting weight loss. Many adopted rigid rules and restrictions around what they could eat, which led to frustration and attrition. While many had used food tracking apps in the past, and found them informative, interviewees expressed that they were too cumbersome to use long-term and lacked actionable guidance. Interviewees want a credible tracking tool that is simple, personalized, and employs a balanced approach to healthy eating.

Conclusion: People trying to eat healthier and lose weight are frustrated by current approaches that dominate the marketplace. Interviewees want a food tracking app that provides actionable, evidence-based guidance to help overcome barriers to improving diet quality without requiring excessive effort. This could promote healthier eating and help consumers navigate a complex, confusing food environment.

Funding: None

Beyond the Classroom: Student Experiences and Confidence in Addressing Food Insecurity

Cara Cuite, PhD, cuite@rutgers.edu, Rutgers University; Rebecca L. Hagedorn-Hatfield, PhD, RDN, LD, Meredith College; Virginia A. Zigmont, PhD, MPH, University of Mississippi; Susan Chen, PhD, MS, San Jose State University; Virginia B. Gray, PhD, RDN, California State University Long Beach

Background: Experiences with food insecurity (FI) beyond collegiate courses may influence students’ confidence to address this issue in their future careers.

Objective: To understand how students’ extracurricular and personal experiences with FI relate to confidence in addressing FI as future professionals.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: A cross-sectional online survey of undergraduate and graduate students majoring in health fields (n=274) at 12 US universities in 2022.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Confidence to address FI was measured using 8 items on a 3-point scale, which were combined into a confidence scale with high internal consistency (0.86). FI was scored using the 2-item Hunger Vital Sign. Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences in confidence between experiences.

Results: Overall mean confidence was 2.17, ranging from 1.87 (using food security assessment tools) to 2.38 (determining barriers that might influence a client’s nutritional status). FI was personally experienced by 43.1% and 21.5% of students during college and childhood, respectively. Respondents (77.0%) reported having some extracurricular experiences with FI, with volunteer work (40.5%) and service learning (23.9%) being most common. Students who had no experiences outside of the classroom were significantly less confident to address FI compared with those who had (p<0.001). Students with volunteer experience (p=0.009), those who attended a lecture on campus (p<0.001) or off-campus (p=0.03), and those with a related student leadership role (p=0.02) had significantly higher confidence. No significant difference in confidence was observed between those reporting personal experience with FI and those who did not.

Conclusion: Students’ overall confidence in their ability to address FI as future professionals was high. Experiences outside the classroom were related to higher confidence,