SNAP-For-U: Testing Usability of an Online Tool Designed to Encourage SNAP Utilization in Urban College Students

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Background: Food insecurity is a major public health crisis in college students. Food insecurity is associated with numerous problems, such as chronic health conditions, increased stress and anxiety, lower grade point average and increased likelihood of withdrawal from college. Unfortunately, federal food programs like SNAP are underutilized in college students due to such reasons as lack of perceived risk and complications in determining eligibility. To address this, SNAP-for-U, an online screening and resource tool, was developed (guided by the Health Belief Model) to encourage SNAP enrollment in college students.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to test the usability and acceptability of SNAP-for-U at a four-year public college in New York City.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: Two sessions of usability testing were conducted using a standardized think-aloud method from September to December 2022. English-speaking college students ages 18 to 25, at risk for food insecurity were recruited.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Usability and acceptability of SNAP-for-U was assessed using a semi-structured interview and a 10-item validated System Usability Scale (SUS) questionnaire. Audio recordings and field notes were systematically reviewed by extracting and coding feedback as positive or negative comments. SUS questionnaire data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test.

Results: Twelve students (50% undergraduate; 92% female; 58% Hispanic or Black/African American; 78% low/very low food security; mean age 21.8±2.8 years) participated in both rounds of user testing. Round 1 (R1) testing highlighted overall positive experiences with SNAP-for-U, however, issues related to user interface design and wording of some questions in the screening tool were noted. Key changes after R1 reflected these concerns, including improved design of response buttons and improved clarity of screening questions. Overall usability tended to improve between R1 and R2 (84.4 vs 89.2; p=0.097, respectively)

Conclusion: Findings from this study will inform further development of the tool, which will be tested using a two-group pilot randomized study, with the ultimate goal of increasing SNAP utilization among food insecure urban college students.

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Using Automated Web Scraping to Document Variation in Sodium Content of Common School Meal Entrees

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Background: Many school districts consider meeting the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) sodium standards challenging. USDA national survey data indicate that in School Year 2014-15, 28% of lunch menus did not meet the standard. Entrees contributed the largest share of sodium, making their sodium content especially important.

Objective: Assess variation in sodium content of popular entrees across a large national sample of school districts.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: School menu data including item sodium content were obtained from 1149 school districts using an automated web scraping program.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Menus were web scraped monthly between August 2022 and January 2023. Variation in sodium content of two popular entrees—pizza and chicken nuggets—was analyzed, with average sodium content compared across different regions in the US and also based on the per-pupil spending of the district.

Results: There is statistically significant variation in entree sodium content between regions, with the South having the highest average level of sodium. The average sodium level is also highest in the districts that have the lowest per-pupil spending.

Conclusion: Sodium content of popular entrees exhibits significant variation across school districts. This highlights the fact that districts could reduce the amount of sodium in their lunch entrees while still offering the popular entrees they serve.

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SNEB Nutrition Educator Competencies: Physical Activity

Relationship of School District Local Wellness Policies on Student Physical Activity Behaviors

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Background: Arizona’s SNAP-Ed program is guided by the evidence-based Socio-Ecological model which posits that individual behaviors are multifactorial and are impacted by settings-based policies. SNAP-Ed staff supported partner schools with physical activity (PA) policy interventions—including Local Wellness Policy (LWP) revisions—and concurrently administered the Kids’ Activi-