Pediatric Feeding Disorder Seminar Impacts Students’ Attitudes

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Background
Adult Learning Theory maintains that adults learn through experience. To gain experience in working with those with disabilities, nutrition majors established the Nutrition and Disability Club (NDC). Since club activities often focus on adults, faculty mentors and the NDC planned an event focusing on feeding issues impacting nutritional status and growth of children with intellectual and physical disabilities. Undergraduate nutrition students have little exposure in providing care for this population or the team approach to treatment in coursework so an extracurricular seminar can meet this need.

Methods
Preparation: The NDC and faculty collaborated and planned a 1.5-hour evidence-based seminar focusing on the feeding issues of children with disabilities. A pediatric hospital’s Feeding Team was invited to present. The speakers included:
❖ Registered Dietitian Nutritionist
❖ Physician
❖ Speech Language Pathologist
❖ Psychologist
Nutrition majors and students with health-related majors were invited to the event.

Implementation:
Each provider reviewed their discipline’s role and approach to addressing feeding issues in children with physical and intellectual disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome and cerebral palsy. A question and answer time followed the presentations.

Evaluation:
Immediately following the seminar, student participants were sent an IRB-approved survey via email. Before distribution, the survey was tested for face validity and content.

Participant Survey Results

Demographics
138 students attended the seminar
76 students completed survey
Gender
Male N=5 (7%)
Female N=71 (93%)
Race
❖ American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1 (1%)
❖ Asian: 5 (7%)
❖ Black or African American: 3 (4%)
❖ White: 62 (82%)
❖ Other: 4 (5%)
❖ Other: 1 (1%)

Majors
Undergraduate/Graduate Student: 71 (95%)
Member of UD Nutrition & Disabilities Club No: N=71 (95%), Yes: N= 5 (7%)

Survey Responses

Prior to this seminar, I felt that I had knowledge regarding the medical/nutritional management of pediatric feeding difficulties...

Survey Question
Strongly Agree
Somewhat Agree
Neutral
Somewhat Disagree
Disagree
Your ability to work as a part of a multidisciplinary team
20 30 1
30 20 1

Conclusions
An extracurricular seminar can be an effective way to expose students to treatment of pediatric disability-related feeding issues as well as the team approach to treatment.

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