Abstract

- Research suggests that obesity prevention programs based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) may be effective to promote healthy weight status in school-age youth.
- SCT was integrated into a nutrition curriculum using improvised kitchen space to provide opportunities for observational learning and development of behavioral skills and self-efficacy.
- The teaching team developed a curriculum based on needs assessment interviews.
- Teaching methods integrated SCT constructs.
- Follow-up surveys indicated perceived increases in confidence to perform multiple targeted skills.

Objectives

- This program was designed to develop cooking skills among youth living in a rural food desert.
- Over four sessions, the teaching team targeted multiple skills essential to planning and cooking healthy meals (reading food labels, menu planning, recipe modification, budgeting, shopping, and food preparation).

Methods

- Session one: analyze food labels.
- Session two: use laptops to find recipes for favorite meals, analyze the nutrition content with an online application, and modify recipes to meet nutrition requirements.
- Session three: travel to a supermarket where and purchase ingredients on a budget of $10.
- Session four: prepare and taste modified recipes in an improvised kitchen.
- With IRB approval, the teaching team administered an anonymous follow-up survey to participants (n = 40) two weeks after the program concluded.
- Each item (Likert scales) addressed a program objective.
- Each item began with the stem, “After participating in the nutrition sessions, I feel more confident to:” followed by 12 target behaviors, like “analyze nutrition information for any recipe.”
- Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

- Of 40 participants, 78% reported increased confidence to perform at least 75% of the target behaviors.

Conclusions

- Integration of SCT in a cooking curriculum could improve self-efficacy to perform cooking related skills.
- Higher self-efficacy may increase frequency of a behavior (Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath, p. 163). Improvised kitchen space provides small teams with chances for observational learning, social support, and stress-free opportunities to develop mastery of skills.