Evaluation of a Nutrition Labelling Online Course

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Introduction

In Canada, the Food and Drugs Act is the principal federal statute governing the labelling of food. The Act applies to all food sold in Canada at all levels of commerce.

The Food and Drug Regulations (FDR) are made under the Food and Drugs Act and cover areas including ingredient listing, nutrition labelling and all types of claims.

Mandatory nutrition labelling (NL) has been in effect since December 2002 when the Government of Canada made regulatory amendments to the FDR related to the labelling of food with the goal of providing information to help Canadians make informed food choices and to help improve their health.

These regulations made it mandatory for a Nutrition Facts table (NFI) to appear on the label of most prepackaged foods.

In 2016, the regulations were revised to include improvements to the NFI and the ingredient list. The information contained in this course is based on the December 2016 revisions to the FDR. The food industry has until 2022 to make these changes.

Health Canada developed an online course to inform health intermediaries (Registered Dietitians, Exercise Specialists and other health professionals) and educators of the most current NL changes.

Rationale and Objective

It has been suggested “applying a robust evaluation at an early pilot phase of learning modules is important to gather results from your target audience regarding their perceived challenges, benefits and values, and overall suggestions for clearly defining or refining a course” is important.1

The goal of this research was to conduct user experience testing of this course to obtain feedback for improvement before it is launched widely.

The overall goal of the course is to ensure that health intermediaries and educators are aware of the most NL information so that it can be used within the context of nutrition education and communication with consumers/clients using the best practices for e-learning and NL education.

Methods

Health intermediaries were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy to participate in the research.

Participants were recruited via emails/telephone calls with health intermediary organizations (e.g. Dietitians of Canada) and educators (e.g. university faculty).

The Nutrition Labelling online course is designed to provide a stimulating learning environment that is entirely learner-centred. The design of the course is to allow learners to navigate seamlessly from module to module and topic to topic within modules.

Moodle which is an open source Learning Management System that allows for the hosting, grading and reporting of online training material was used for the course.

Data Collection

- Online survey at end of course (n = 95): quantitative and qualitative data
- Five discussion group interviews (n = 21): qualitative data

Online Course

Findings

% change in correct responses Pre/Post Quiz*:

Level of Understanding and Confidence of Participants:

Course Feedback

Conclusions

Findings from this study will inform content and structural improvements to the Nutrition Labelling online course.

This research demonstrates the importance of user experience testing in ensuring a course that provides information that is usable, relevant and accessible to the target audience.

End-user feedback is essential, starting early in the development process2, in order to develop a high-quality product that meets the needs of the learners.

References