

Attitudes towards nutrition education among pediatricians and guardians.

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Background and Hypothesis:

Childhood obesity rates in the United States are at historic highs. In Lake County, Indiana, the obesity rates of WIC children ages 2-5 years old is 12.1%. Obesity management is left in the hands of practitioners' clinical judgment; yet, a survey found that the average medical school devotes less than 20 hours to nutrition education. Since 62% of patients believe that their physicians can help them lose weight, having physicians who are not educated on nutrition leaves patients without the help they need.

Surveys were developed to assess the level of nutrition counseling provided by physicians and how patients/guardians prefer to be educated. Our hypothesis is that pediatricians will benefit from further nutrition education and that guardians will desire an accessible online source.

Methods:

A physician survey was composed to determine how much nutrition education pediatricians received in medical school/residency and how they currently educate their patients. The goal of the guardian survey was to determine who in the household feeds the children and how they would prefer to receive education.

Results:

The surveys will be utilized for future research, and the results will help determine the approach for educating physicians and guardians. A booklet of healthy recipes was also developed to educate on healthy eating and as a participation benefit. The goal of the booklet was to choose easy, child friendly recipes that the family could cook together. To gain background on nutrition education, we observed the different education methods of local pediatricians and reviewed the literature.

Potential Impact:

Intervention at both the clinical and community levels will be important for improving long-term health outcomes in pediatric patients. The knowledge gained from these surveys will aid in the development of programs needed to provide physicians, guardians, and patients with proper nutrition education.