THE FUTURE OF NUTRITION IN PHARMACY EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF UNDERGRADUATE PHARMACY STUDENTS

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Objective: Optimizing student learning in relation to nutrition is essential to ensure relevant nutrition advice to public health. Hence, we conducted an exploratory study to assess the knowledge of final year undergraduate pharmacy students of various aspects of nutrition.

Design: A 30-single best answer multiple choice item was developed as an informal assessment to evaluate students’ knowledge of basic nutrition principle and their ability to put this knowledge into practical advice. The questions were developed in form of case scenarios in a direct patient care setting taking into account the practice need and competency of entry-level pharmacists. Students also received feedback about their answers to support their learning and professional development. An informal discussion was involved in which students share their thinking about their learning experience and the preference to learn more about nutrition.

Results: Students performed significantly better on the question that address general nutritional advice and questions pertaining to healthy pregnancy and breastfeeding, but not on questions that require clinical application specifically in cardiovascular cases. About 75% of the cohort agreed that they would like to learn more about nutrition.

Conclusion: Because of an increasing emphasis on prevention of chronic disease development, students must be able to identify and assess dietary risk factors associated with the development of these illnesses. Moreover, students need to acquire and develop motivational counselling and referral abilities. Our results suggest the need for a multidisciplinary educational initiative to develop nutrition education competencies and curricula for pharmacy program considering best practices and patients outcomes. The inclusion of nutrition in students’ training at all levels is necessary to maintain a focus on its critical role in patient care.