Healthcare and Wellness Practitioner Confidence in Provision of Nutrition Education and Use of Evidence-Based Nutrition Resources

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Objectives: Differences in messaging from healthcare and wellness practitioners can lead to consumer confusion and mistrust in nutrition. The regular use of evidence-based nutrition resources by practitioners could improve consistency in patient education. The confidence registered dietitians (RDNs) and non-RDN practitioners have in providing nutrition education and the use of evidence-based nutrition resources in patient education is not known. Objectives: 1) To evaluate how confident RDN and non-RDN practitioners are in providing nutrition education, and 2) to evaluate RDN and non-RDN use of evidence-based nutrition resources.

Methods: An exploratory, online, cross-sectional study was conducted with a convenience sample of 34 RDNs and 32 non-RDN practitioners. The 15 question survey was tested for face validity and revised accordingly. Recruitment occurred via email and through local and state-wide professional organization list-serves. Confidence questions were measured using Likert scales and were scored from 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (extremely confident). Differences in confidence between groups were determined using Mann-Whitney U tests (P < 0.05).

Results: Eighty-five % of RDNs and 31% of non-RDNs felt very or extremely confident in their ability to find evidence-based nutrition information; 65% of RDNs and 31% of non-RDNs felt very or extremely confident in their ability to provide evidence-based nutrition information to their patients. Non-RDNs felt less confident than RDNs both in finding (P < 0.01) and providing (P < 0.01) evidence-based nutrition information. Forty-one % of non-RDNs reported providing nutrition education to more than a quarter of their patients over the past year. More than 60% of RDNs and more than 70% of non-RDNs reported being unfamiliar with or never using multiple resources for evidence-based nutrition information, including Cochrane, Nutrition Evidence Systematic Reviews, and Practice-based Evidence in Nutrition.

Conclusions: The majority of RDNs and a third of non-RDNs felt highly confident in their ability to find and provide evidence-based nutrition information. However, more than half of RDNs and non-RDNs reported being unfamiliar with or never using multiple resources for evidence-based nutrition information.

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