ASSESSMENT OF NUTRITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND IMPACT OF NUTRITION EDUCATION

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Abstract

Life cannot be sustained without adequate nourishment. The word “nutrition” is often paired with the word “food”. The biological importance of food is dictated by the nutrients it contains. Acquiring nutritional knowledge is essential for improved diet practices. Nutritional knowledge can be gained by means of nutrition education. In this study, two hundred adolescent girls between sixteen to eighteen years were selected as samples. Their nutritional knowledge was assessed with the help of questionnaire. When compared with male, female were having greater responsibility in household duties, especially in improving the nutritional status of family members. In this study, it was found that provision of nutrition education had a significant impact on nutrition knowledge among sub samples. So it can be concluded that nutrition education plays a vital role in improving the nutritional knowledge, which in turn will improve the nutritional status of the respondents and their family members.

INTRODUCTION

Life cannot be sustained without adequate nourishment. The word “nutrition” is often paired with the word “food”. Nutrition is a science that encompasses all the interactions that occur between living organisms and food. The biological importance of food is dictated by the nutrients it contains.1

Common belief is that acquiring nutritional knowledge will itself lead to improved dietary practices. Nutritional knowledge can be gained by means of nutrition education. Nutrition education2 can be defined as “the process of helping individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and motivation needed to make appropriate food choices throughout the life”. The health habits established affects the quality of life. By practicing wellness, healthy life can be achieved. Good habits for proper life management3 includes,

- Choosing and eating nutritious food
- Exercising regularly
- Having adequate sleep
- Learning to handle stress
- Avoiding harmful substances

Adolescents are future parents. Particularly women play a significant role in the development of their offspring.4 So if they have better nutritional knowledge and awareness on nutrition they improve the nutritional status of family members and good health can be maintained.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, two hundred adolescent girls were selected as samples in the age group of sixteen to eighteen years. Their nutritional knowledge was assessed with the help of questionnaire.

The questionnaire which was developed by the investigator comprises of general information such as name, age and
educational level. For assessment of nutritional knowledge the questions were asked under the following headings,

- Basics in nutrition
- Nutrients
- Deficiency diseases
- Processing and cooking methods
- Adolescent disorders and Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for adolescent girls.
- Life style modification.

Based on “arbitrary scale” scores were given. By using this scale, for each correct answer one mark is given. So the maximum score is fifty. After assigning total scores, twenty sub samples having less nutritional knowledge were selected for imparting and studying the effect of nutrition education.

The contents which were explained through nutrition education covers mainly the aspects which were asked in the questionnaire. The method which was used to provide nutrition education was lecture method by using tools such as tools, models, chalk, board and pamphlet. Finally the impact of nutrition education was evaluated by using standard statistical methods.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Table I represents the impact of nutrition education on nutritional knowledge of the sub samples. The mean value of the score obtained by subsamples shows it was very high only after nutrition education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Nutritional Knowledge</th>
<th>Scores (mean value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Before Nutrition Education</td>
<td>15.45±2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>After Nutrition Education</td>
<td>47.20±2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical analysis was done to test the significance of impact of nutrition education. Paired-t test was carried out and it was found that the calculated value was greater than the table value at 0.05% level of significance. This shows that the provided nutrition education had a significant impact on nutritional knowledge of the selected samples.

This shows the women learn more quickly and respond more readily and practically to information.

**CONCLUSION**

When compared with male, female were having greater responsibility in household duties, especially in improving the nutritional status of their family members.

In this study, the selected adolescent girls were having basic ideas about nutrition but they were lacking in scientific concepts related to nutrition. It was also found that provision of nutrition education had a significant impact on nutritional knowledge among sub samples. So it can be concluded that nutrition education plays a vital role in improving
the nutritional knowledge, which in turn will improve the nutritional status of the respondents and their family members.

REFERENCES

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