

Dietetics Practice in the Scope of Disease Prevention in Community Settings: A School-Based Obesity Prevention Program

Authors : Elham Abbas Aljaaly, Nahlaa Abdulwahab Khalifa

Abstract : The active method of disease prevention is seen as the most affordable and sustainable action to deal with risks of non-communicable diseases such as obesity. This eight-week project aimed to pilot the feasibility and acceptability of a school-based programme, which is proposed to prevent and modify overweight status and possible related risk factors among student girls 'at the intermediate level' in Jeddah city. The programme was conducted through comprehensible approach targeting physical environment and school policies (nutritional/exercise/behavioural approach). The programme was designed to cultivate the personal and environmental awareness in schools for girls. This was applied by promoting healthy eating and physical activity through policies, physical education, healthier options for school canteens, and the creation of school health teams. The prevention programme was applied on 68 students (who agreed to participate) from grades 7th, 8th and 9th. A pre and post assessment questionnaire was employed on 66 students. The questionnaires were designed to obtain information on students' knowledge about health, nutrition and physical activity. Survey questions included information about nutrients, food consumption patterns, food intake and lifestyle. Physical education included training sessions for new opportunities for physical activities to be performed during school or after school hours. A running competition 'to enhance students' performance for physical activities' was also conducted during the school visit. A visit to the school canteen was conducted to check, observe, record and assess all available food/beverage items and meals. The assessment method was a subjective method for the type of food/beverages if high in saturated fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) or non-HFSS. The school canteen administrators were encouraged to provide healthy food/beverage items and a sample healthy canteen was provided for implementation. Two healthy options were introduced to the school canteen. A follow up for students' preferences for the introduced options and the purchasing power were assessed. Thirty-eight percent of young girls (n=26) were not participating in any form of physical activities inside or outside school. Skipping breakfast was stated by 42% (n=28) of students with no daily consumption (19%, n=13) for fruit/vegetables. Significant changes were noticed in students' (n=66) overall responses to the pre and post questions (P value=.001). All students had participated in the conducted running competition sessions and reported satisfaction and enjoyment about the sessions. No absence was reported by the research team for attending physical education and activity sessions throughout the delivered programme. The purchasing power of the introduced healthy options of 'Salad and oatmeal' was increased to 18% in 8 weeks at the school canteen, and slightly affected the purchase for other less healthy options. The piloted programme endorsed better health and nutrition knowledge, healthy eating and lifestyle attitude, which could help young girls to obtain sustainable changes. It is expected that the outcomes of the programme will be a cornerstone for the futuristic national study that will assist policy makers and participants to build a knowledgeable health promotion scenario and make sure that school students have access to healthy foods, physical exercise and healthy lifestyle.

Keywords : adolescents, diet, exercise, behaviours, overweight/obesity, prevention-intervention programme, Saudi Arabia, schoolgirls

Conference Title : ICO 2018 : International Conference on Obesity

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : July 05-06, 2018