

20.27: Nutrition Information Sources and Older Adults

Learning Objectives

- Better educated people and information sources

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Overview

Various socioeconomic factors, such as occupation, income, race, and education level, are associated with health outcomes. Prominent among them, education level has proved to be a strong predictor of diet quality, health behavior patterns, and disease risk. Studies have found that better-educated people have healthier diets than those with less education, leading some researchers to hypothesize that better-educated people may obtain nutrition information from more reliable sources than less-educated people.

This study examined that hypothesis among a sample of 176 adults aged 50 years or older. The participants completed a survey which asked whether or not they primarily relied upon each of the following sources for information about nutrition: doctors, other medical professionals, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, friends, relatives, and neighbors. Analysis involved comparing the sources by education level. Older adults are highly vulnerable to diet-related disease. Knowing which sources they rely on can enable nutrition educators and professionals to target those sources with high-quality nutrition messages, tailored to the needs and education level of the older-adult audience.

Questions to Answer

What sources of nutrition information do older adults rely on? Do these sources differ according to the educational attainment and gender of the adults? Are these sources of nutrition information related to dietary practices, such as taking supplements?

Design Issues

Given that the sample was drawn only from the New England area and that 93% were Caucasian, the results of this study should not be generalized to older adults in other regions or racial and ethnic groups. The Internet as a source of nutrition information was not included in the survey; it is likely a primary source among today's older adults.

Descriptions of Variables

Table 20.27.1: Description of Variables

Variable	Description
coll4yrplus	Highest level of education completed: 0 = "< 4 years of college" (i.e., secondary school, high school, vocational school, community or junior college) 1 = "≥ 4 years of college" (i.e., four-year college, graduate or professional school)
gender	1 = female, 2 = male
doctor	Is your doctor a primary source of information about nutrition? 1 = yes, 2 = no

magazine	Are magazines a primary source of information about nutrition? 1 = yes, 2 = no
tv	Is TV a primary source of information about nutrition? 1 = yes, 2 = no
friends	Are friends a primary source of information about nutrition? 1 = yes, 2 = no
supps	Are you taking any dietary supplements? 1 = yes, 2 = no

Data Files

Nutrition_information.xls

Links

Nutrition Information For You

Evaluating Nutrition Information (see pages 36-43)

Nutrition Accuracy in Popular Magazines

References

- McKay, D. L., Houser, R. F., Blumberg, J. B., Goldberg, J. P. (2006). Nutrition information sources vary with education level in a population of older adults. Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 106, 1108-1111.

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