

Dietary Habits and Nutrition in Asian American Patients: Incorporating Cultural Considerations in Medicine and Medical Education



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Background

- Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the United States have a high incidence of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, and other chronic conditions.¹
- Nutritional education and cultural competence play an important role in preventing and managing such diseases in medicine.²
- The ability of health professionals to reliably provide quality dietary recommendations to different populations depends largely on their nutritional training in preclinical years.²
- This study aims to assess the comfortability and confidence in medical students to recognize, counsel, and address concerns related to diet and nutrition in AAPI communities.

Methods

- 10 medical students were recruited to attend a PowerPoint-based discussion followed by a Q&A session with licensed dietician.
- Topics discussed:
 - Diversity of Asian Diasporas in the Americas
 - Monosodium Glutamate; “Chinese Restaurant Syndrome”
 - Sodium in the Asian heritage diet
 - BMI differences in the United States
 - Caring for the Muslim patient during Ramadan
- Pre- and post-surveys consisting of 5 identical questions were administered to assess participants’ attitudes towards certain statements.

Methods

Figure 1. Sample question from Qualtrics included in both the pre and post survey.

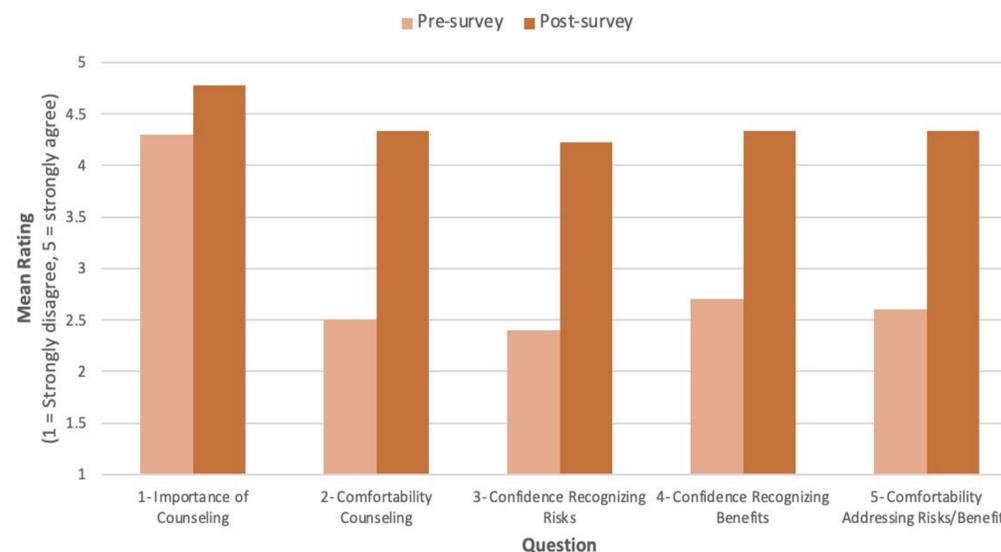
I am comfortable counseling AAPI patients on their dietary habits



Participants were asked to assess how well they agree with the statements on a scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Results

Figure 2. Participants’ attitudes towards cultural considerations among Asian American diets before and after the discussion



Prior to the discussion, few medical students were confident in recognizing, counseling, and addressing specific cultural considerations of Asian-American diets. Following the discussion, all were significantly more confident in these areas (P=0.004).

Discussion

- Medical students report more confidence and comfort in recognizing, addressing, and counseling patients on Asian dietary habits and nutrition-related issues following formal education.
- The Q&A session with a licensed dietician suggests that medical students may benefit from increased incorporation of interprofessional education with the goal of preparing students to provide patient-centered care in a collaborative environment.
- Future research is warranted involving a larger sample sizer (greater than N=10).
- Further research is required to examine changes in practice beyond just changes in attitude.
- Future research can work to encourage and implement standardized AAPI nutritional education into the medical school curriculum.

References

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2. Devries S, Willett W, Bonow RO. Nutrition Education in Medical School, Residency Training, and Practice. JAMA. 2019;321(14):1351–1352. doi:10.1001/jama.2019.1581