

Title: Nutrition Competency in Nurses and Nutrition Education: Knowledge and Confidence in Practice

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Abstract

Nurses are the largest healthcare occupation in the United States and are the first or only contact for nutrition education, specifically in home visitation programs. However, there has been a significant amount of research to support the lack of nutrition knowledge and education for healthcare professionals, including nurses. The purpose of this study was to determine the need for nutrition education for nurses by assessing their confidence and knowledge in nutrition education related to maternal and infant health. The study focused on nurses working in maternal and infant health programs in Minnesota and North Dakota. A survey was distributed to participants to assess personal characteristics, confidence, knowledge, and future nutrition education preferences. Independent variables of educational background, recency of degree, length of nursing and practice experience, nursing credential, and practice type were investigated and their relationship to nurses' knowledge and confidence in nutrition education were assessed. Descriptive statistics and a Chi Square Test for Independence were utilized. Out of 34 participants, 23 completed 100% of the survey. Results revealed a majority of participants (n=12) had a lack of adequate nutrition knowledge in the five assessed nutrition education categories, particularly, infant diet needs and maternal diet needs. Providing nutrition education that emphasized information on maternal and infant diet needs through handouts, videos, and

presentations at a length less than 60 minutes at a time will improve the nutrition knowledge of nurses, furthermore improving their confidence in providing nutrition education to patients.