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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS, NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE, NUTRITION COMPETENCIES AND ATTITUDES IN COMMUNITY-DWELLING OLDER PEOPLE IN SINGAPORE: FINDINGS FROM THE SHIELD STUDY

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Background

Nutrition literacy consists of an individual's knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, process, and understand nutrition information to make appropriate nutrition-related decisions. This cross-sectional study was designed to: (1) examine the associations between socio-demographic factors and nutrition knowledge, competencies (e.g. ability to obtain and understand information on nutrition) and attitudes, (2) identify factors associated with higher nutrition knowledge assessment scores in community-dwelling older persons in Singapore.

Methods

400 (183 males and 217 females) nourished community-dwelling older person aged 65 years and above took part in this study. Participants' socio-demographics information, nutrition knowledge, competencies, attitudes and sources of nutrition information were captured; and these associations were examined using Chi-square and Fisher's Exact tests. Factors associated with nutrition knowledge were determined using a stepwise multiple regression model.

Results

Univariate analyses showed being female, having a higher education level and having access to help from friends/family were associated with higher nutrition knowledge. Higher educational level was found to be positively correlated with the ability to obtain and verify nutrition information. Compared to females; males were more likely to leave food decisions to others. Regression analysis showed that gender (females), ethnicity and self-reported ability to understand nutrition information were associated with higher nutrition knowledge scores.

Conclusion

To align with the national strategy of improving population health "Beyond Hospital to Community", targeted nutrition interventional programs on the older persons should focus on men of lower educational background, and actively involve their carers, extended family and friends. Additionally, using multi-lingual and cultural appropriate messaging is important in multi-cultural Singapore.