

# **Nutrition and Wellness: A Personalized Educational Exercise for Medical Students**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Whereas many patients look to their physicians for nutritional advice, few physicians believe they are adequately prepared to provide such information. Over half of graduating medical students describe the time devoted to nutrition in medical school as inadequate. This study examined the effects of an innovative and personalized approach to medical student nutrition education on students' willingness to discuss nutritional issues with their patients and their intent to change personal health-related behavior. The study also assessed medical student sources for nutritional information. Second-year medical students participated in a nutritional exercise that consisted of receiving their own lipid panel, fasting plasma glucose, and arterial pressure measurements, selecting a healthy lunch from a fast food menu, and discussing nutrition with a clinical dietician. Students then completed a nutrition awareness survey. Over 90% of students reported that they were likely to counsel patients on nutritional issues or refer them to a dietician. Forty-six percent stated that the exercise would result in a change in their own diet or exercise pattern; only eighteen percent anticipated changing their reliance on health care practitioners. The majority of students felt they were knowledgeable about nutritional guidelines. However, this knowledge came chiefly from self-directed learning or mainstream media rather than from medical school instruction or health care professionals. The results suggest that the personalized nutrition exercise had a positive effect on student attitudes toward the role of nutrition in medical practice and confirm the need for improved delivery of nutrition education in the medical curriculum.

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