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A novel, 12 week dietitian-led curriculum beneficially modulates nutrition behavior in older adults attending community rehabilitation

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Statement of the Problem: Nutrition is regarded as a major modifier of cardiac disease incidence and severity. Cardiac rehabilitation (CR) is a common tool aimed at primary prevention. By definition CR is multi-disciplinary and includes nutritional input.

MedEx is a large, community based exercise program. Until recently there was no nutrition component within MedEx. CPK designed, delivered and evaluated a novel 12 week, dietitian-led nutrition curriculum. The nutrition curriculum involved 12 short (~10min) weekly talks on diverse nutritional topics delivered by a registered dietitian (CPK). Topics were aimed to be most relevant for older adults, those with chronic cardiac disease and those exercising regularly.

112 (83 male) attended >75% of talks. The weekly talks were rated as excellent by 38, very good by 52 and good by 13 subjects. Further, weekly talks were rated as very useful, quite useful or useful by 33, 37 and 34 subjects as well as very practical, quite practical or practical by 66, 35 and 6 subjects respectively. 100% of respondents would recommended the 'curriculum' to a friend. 87 of 102 subjects (86%) reported having changed their dietary habits since the beginning of the curriculum. The largest reported changes were increased consumption of plant protein (n=37), fruit and vegetables (n=35) and wholegrains (n=11).

Nutrition has a major influence on incidence and progression of cardiac disease. However, work from our group and others demonstrates both suboptimal nutritional knowledge and behaviours in these cohorts. CR programs offer a unique and promising opportunity to provide targeted, evidence-based nutritional advice and potentially modify nutritional behaviours.

Biography

Conor P Kerley has his expertise in chronic disease prevention and treatment. He received his Bachelor's degree in Human Nutrition and Dietetics from Trinity College Dublin and his PhD from University College Dublin. He has presented his award winning findings at multiple national and international nutrition and medical conferences. His research has been published in international peer-reviewed medical journals and has attracted over €210,000 in research funding to date. In addition to his clinical research, He served as chairperson of the Scientific and Research Steering Group of the Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute and is an active member of several professional societies including the Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute, Nutrition Society, The National Blood Pressure Council and The True Health Initiative. The current work is based on his design and implementation of a novel, innovative nutrition education intervention in addition to an exercise focused rehabilitation program.

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