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## Innovative strategy to improve food safety standards in the emirates of Dubai by happiness inspection

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**Introduction:** Dubai Municipality Food Safety Department used an innovative strategy “Happiness Inspection-No fine but more support & guidance” to improve food safety standards of 450 establishments evaluated as “unsatisfactory” consecutively in the last 3 years and required improvements to meet regulatory standards.

**Methods:** Initial data for these establishments was retrieved from Food Inspection System to determine non-conformities. Following data analysis, these establishments were visited to establish root causes of non-conformities. A behavior-based approach of inspection i.e. coaching, guidance, on the job training, regular meetings and frequent follow-ups were used which resulted in gradual improvement in hygiene practices. After achieving the required level of compliance, establishments were scheduled back to regular routine inspections.

**Results:** After implementing Happiness Inspections, the evident improvement was noticed in food safety standards at these establishments. Sixty percent of establishments have achieved improved food safety scores within 9 months. Improved establishments data was statistically analyzed (t-test) and a significant improvement ( $p < 0.05$ ) was observed where food safety standards i.e. cross-contamination, cleaning & disinfection, and pest control showed considerable improvement. Next routine inspection reports showed noticeable improvement in grade & color cards issued to these establishments.

**Significance:** Through this coaching and guidance approach, food safety culture has also been improved significantly inside these establishments. This initiative also assisted regulatory authorities in planning newly specialized training to improve regular inspection approach.

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