

Training modules for improving knowledge and practices of owners and food handlers in restaurants

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Food borne illnesses are a serious threat to public health. Most of these illnesses are caused by foods that have been mishandled or mistreated during storage, pre-preparation, preparation and service. The impact of these illnesses is substantial. Therefore, there is a need for aggressive efforts to control hazards associated with food production and service at various stages. Food safety and quality can be assured only if persons employed in various operations have the correct and adequate knowledge about critical issues dealing with food safety and quality. Further, there is a need to bring various stakeholders so that a practical and sustainable strategy can emerge to produce food that is safe, nutritious and healthy. The present study was an action project which addressed key issues that are required to augment knowledge and motivate restaurant owners and food handlers to adopt desirable practices. Knowledge and sanitary and hygiene practices were assessed and gaps were identified. Based on the gaps, training was provided through 13-15 sessions over a period of 3 months, on salient issues including HACCP that were covered using various methodologies with support of audiovisual aids, models, demonstrations, exhibitions. Pamphlets, handouts and worksheets were developed. Besides imparting knowledge on key issues the project focused on sensitizing the vendors to conduct self-analysis. Emphasis was on participatory, experiential learning and hands-on skill training. Knowledge and practices of the owners were evaluated after the training. Post training responses of the target group showed clear benefits in terms of improvement in knowledge on almost all aspects related to food safety and hygiene, food quality, nutrition, personal hygiene. Improvements were observed in several food hygiene practices. The modules and methodologies developed can be utilized for improving knowledge and effecting behavioral change in order to ensure food safety and quality and reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses.

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