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Innovation in food hygiene and safety: Could education play a role?

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Statement of the Problem: Food safety violations at the consumer stage are common and nearly 40% of food-borne outbreaks occur in the domestic setting. Health-related behavior develops through childhood and adolescence and once settled in adulthood is hardly changed. Practices in safe handling of food usually rely on beliefs, skills and material environment. Education programs have been proved to be an effective, science-based and sustainable strategy to help children mitigate risk, thus reducing the health burden from food-borne illness in Europe (e-Bug project). The development of relevant educational resources for adolescents and young adults is included as a goal in the EU funded SafeConsumE project (2017-2022).

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Important food safety educational opportunities and messages are presently being identified by the relevant SafeConsumE work packages. Educational materials and programs for teenagers and young adults will be developed for use in the classroom and at home and will be tested with educators and students throughout development. All educational resources will be available, free of charge, after development, evaluation and endorsement by relative authorities nationally and in Europe.

Findings: Research on what educational resources regarding food hygiene and safety are available in Europe for teenagers and young adults exhibit significant diversity in scope, extent and orientation. Schools, educators and students are being recruited in four European countries to access needs for educational resources and evaluate skills, beliefs and the impact of the material environment on food safety education.

Conclusion & Significance: Educational programs increasing skills and knowledge and aiding teenagers to handle food safely could play a role in the development and implementation of dynamic, sustainable and inclusive policy models that stimulate and support national and EU level initiatives, regarding food hygiene and safety. Overall, the SafeConsumE project aims to support transformation towards a more healthy population and cost-efficacy by reduced foodborne illness, and a more sustainable community by less food-waste and environmentally friendly solutions.

Biography

Dimitra Gennimata is a Pharmacist, working in a hospital setting since 1996 and offering services as an External Scientific Associate to the National School of Public Health since 2006. She has completed her Postgraduate studies in Public Health (MPH, Health Education and Promotion), Teaching and Counseling Certificates from the School of Pedagogic and Technological Sciences and her PhD thesis is in the field of Microbial Genetics and Clinical Pharmacology (Molecular Mechanisms of Microbial Resistance to antibiotics). She is particularly interested in Public Health and Patient Safety, having actively participated and been involved in relative European projects and fora

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