

# The importance of integration of nutrition education in patient care: curricular integration and quality improvement



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## Introduction

Nutrition is critical in the management of many chronic diseases. As a result, nutrition counseling is recommended by the USPSTF for patients with obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia.

A 2018 study described the correlation between nutrition education in residency and counseling of patients regarding nutrition. That study highlighted the lack of formal nutrition education across internal medicine residencies and "only 22% of residents reported counseling their patients often/always on dietary changes."

## Aim

Integrate culinary medicine into ambulatory practice through the establishment of a two-week culinary medicine elective at our Internal Medicine Residency.

Demonstrate need and measure progress of the elective with a resident survey before implementation of the elective.

## Methods

A committee consisting of Internal Medicine residents from each year and a faculty advisor will develop and refine the curriculum as the elective goes into practice.

Current working objectives cover:

- Basic principles of nutrition
- The relationship between food and specific disease states
- Review of common diets
- Cooking styles and techniques
- Budget friendly, cost-effective adaptations of healthy eating and shopping
- Applying these concepts to patient education

To assess the impact of the elective on resident knowledge and integration into practice, a simple 3 question survey was developed as part of a quality improvement project.

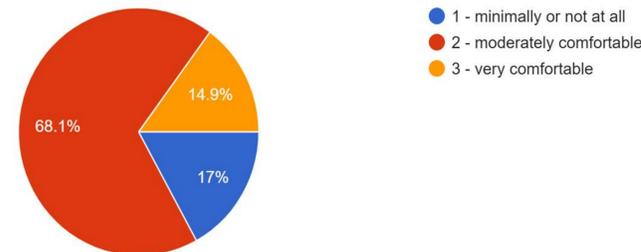
This survey was administered to Internal Medicine residents prior to implementation of the elective and will be repeated in 1- and 2-year intervals in 2021 and 2022.

## Results

28 residents responded to the survey prior to initiation of the culinary medicine elective. 70% of residents were moderately comfortable with nutrition in general and 19% were minimally or not at all comfortable. 29% reported feeling minimally or not at all comfortable discussing food with their patients as it relates to their disease states. 32% reported rarely or not discussing specific nutrition information with their patients at all. The elective is now available to residents in its early stages and the survey will be repeated after at least a year has passed in 2021.

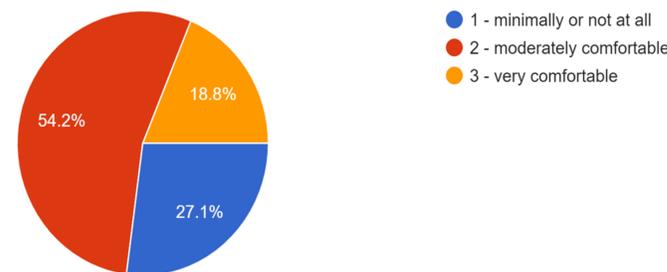
How comfortable are you with nutrition in general?

47 responses



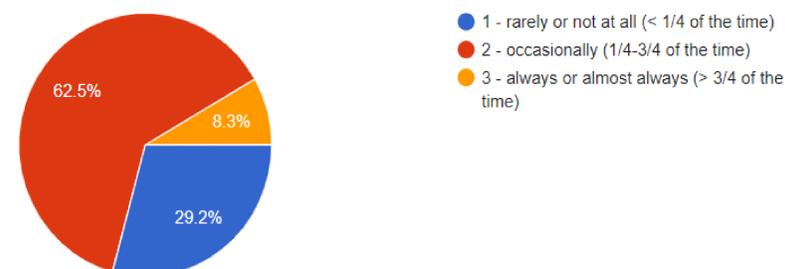
How comfortable are you discussing food with your patients as it relates to their disease state(s)?

48 responses



How often do you discuss specific nutrition information with your patients?

48 responses



## Resident Survey Comments

- We need more formal education on nutrition for ourselves and to be better able to share with patients!
- Time constraints and patient population may be confounding factors to the last question.
- "Good food" is expensive
- Would love to learn more

## Conclusion

- Nutrition education is significantly lacking.
- Initial survey results prior to initiation of the elective demonstrate significant room for improvement at our Internal Medicine residency program.
- Several of the residents specifically commented that they wanted more nutrition education.
- Our solution: implementation of a 2-week culinary medicine elective, encouraging residents to seek this knowledge and increase their comfort discussing nutrition with their patients.
- We anticipate a change in culture and increased frequency of discussion of food as medicine and patient education regarding nutrition and its health impact.
- Repeating the survey in 1- and 2-year intervals (2021 and 2022) will allow us to measure the impact on resident understanding and ability to discuss nutrition with patients.

## Sources

1. US Preventive Services Task Force. Healthful Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults Without Known Risk Factors: Behavioral Counseling. <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/document/RecommendationStatementFinal/healthful-diet-and-physical-activity-for-cardiovascular-disease-prevention-in-adults-without-known-risk-factors-behavioral-counseling>. Accessed August 1, 2020.
2. Khandelwal, S., Zemore, S. E., & Hemmerling, A. (2018). Nutrition Education in Internal Medicine Residency Programs and Predictors of Residents' Dietary Counseling Practices. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, 5, 238212051876336. doi:10.1177/2382120518763360