

The Knowledge and Attitudes of Pediatricians Toward Whole Food Plant-Based Diets

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Introduction

- There has been abundant evidence showing the health benefits of a plant-based diet, such as reduced risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and malignancies.¹⁻²
- Many physicians do not stress the importance these diets as an important aspect of chronic disease prevention and treatment.
- Pediatricians have an important role in dietary education of children, but there is scarce data focused specifically on pediatricians' knowledge regarding plant-based nutrition.³
- Our study assessed pediatrician's general nutritional knowledge and attitudes regarding whole food plant-based diets.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was done using a previously implemented questionnaire that was distributed among a sample of pediatricians.

Survey was administered from January 2021 to October 2021. 117 participants responded to the survey.

Survey items were scored based on nutrition knowledge and attitudes toward plant-based diets, and then analyzed for mean scores.

Results

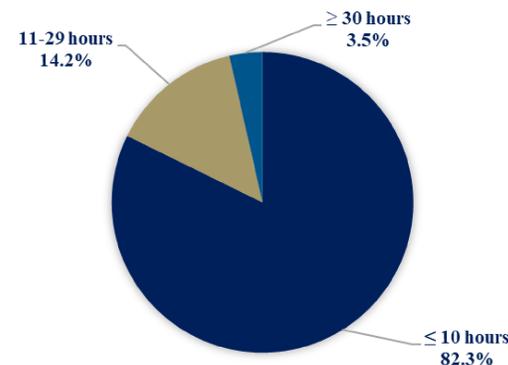
Table 1: Demographic characteristics of survey participants (n=117)

	Value
Age, median, range	42 years (24-75)
Caucasian race, %	90 (77.0%)
Female, %	90 (77.0%)
Have Children, %	73 (62.4%)
Pediatric Residents, %	44 (37.6%)
Following Plant-Based Diet*, %	65 (55.5%)

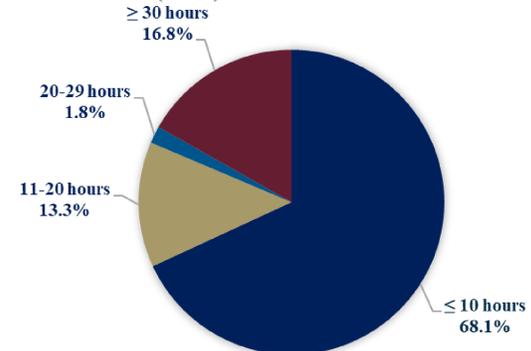
* Plant-based diet means following a vegetarian, vegan or whole-food plant-based diet

Figure 1: Nutrition Education Received by Pediatricians in Medical School and Residency

NUTRITION EDUCATION HOURS RECEIVED IN MEDICAL SCHOOL

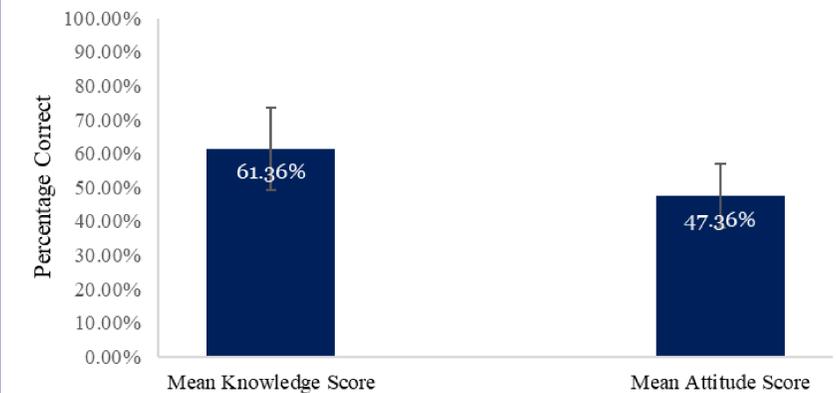


NUTRITION CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION (CME) HOURS RECEIVED



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Figure 2: Mean Knowledge and Attitude Scores Toward Plant-Based Diets



- Out of 10 knowledge questions, mean correct score for our participants was 61.36%. Out of 9 attitude questions, mean correct score for our participants was 47.36%.

Conclusions

- Pediatricians are exposed to very little nutrition education hours during medical school and in their continued education training.
- A significant portion of pediatricians in our survey had low average knowledge base in vegetarian nutrition and did not hold positive attitudes concerning plant-based diets.
- Increasing education hours for pediatricians regarding plant-based diets may help them better counsel their patients on their dietary decisions.

Selected References

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2. Kahleova, H., McCann, J., Alwarith, J., Rembert, E., Tura, A., Holubkov, R., & Barnard, N. D. (2021). A plant-based diet in overweight adults in a 16-week randomized clinical trial: The role of dietary acid load. *Clinical nutrition ESPEN*, 44, 150–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clnesp.2021.05.015>
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