Should We Be Providing Food Directly to Patients in Primary Care? A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Objective This study aimed to describe changes in medical students’ self-perceived nutrition competence at three time points during medical training.

Method A prospective longitudinal observational study was conducted among one year-group of students at the University of Auckland, School of Medicine. In May 2016, Year 2 medical students (phase 1, preclinical) were surveyed for self-perceived nutrition competence using the validated NUTCOMP tool. The survey was repeated with the same students in February 2018 as Year 4 students and July 2019 (phase 2, clinical) as Year 5 students.

Results In 2016, 102 of 279 eligible Year 2 medical students completed the survey [response rate (RR) 36.7%]. In 2018, 89 Year 4 students repeated the survey (RR 87.3%) and 26 students as Year 5 students in 2019 (RR 25.5%). There was a significant increase in total NUTCOMP scores (knowledge, skills, confidence to counsel and attitude towards nutrition) between Year 2 and Year 4 (p=0.012). There was a significant increase in the confidence to counsel construct (mean difference 7.615, 95% CI 2.291-12.939, p=0.003) between Year 2 and Year 4. Constructs with lowest scores at all time points were nutrition knowledge and nutrition skills. There was clear desire for more nutrition education from all students: Year 2 [mean=3.8 out of 5, (1.1)], Year 4 [mean=3.9 out 5 (0.9)], Year 5 [mean=3.8 out of 5 (0.8)].