



INFORMATION AND AWARENESS OF THE STUDENTS' HEALTHY EATING

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ABSTRACT

Healthy eating can be defined as a balanced intake of food to meet the physiological needs of the body. Students are particular social group characterized by predominant mental work, specific way of relaxation and complete physical and neuro- psychical development.

Purpose:

The aim of this study is to establish the level of awareness of the students on the basic principles of healthy eating and how much they know about 'useful' and 'harmful' foods.

Materials and Methods:

In an anonymous survey 40 students from the first year of 'Nurse' in the Trakia University were involved. The survey was conducted in 2014 year. The survey data were processed with mathematical and graphical methods - Microsoft Office Excel 2003.ink.

The survey found that the future health professionals have a relatively high level of awareness of the useful and harmful food products. Although only a few people (17.5%) really follow all the principles of healthy eating it is good to discover that 75% of them use them partially. On the base of that we came to the following conclusion:

1. Most of the students have formed correct ideas about healthy eating, good and bad food early in their education;
2. The main source of information for rational nutrition for about two thirds of the students are the Internet and their friends, and for about 50% - the courses 'Introduction to Philosophy of Nursing - Theoretical Basis' and 'Health Promotion'.
3. Surprisingly family itself does not provide the necessary basis of notions for healthy eating of the young people. The reasons should be further investigated.
4. The respondents assess their diet realistically - with their positive and negative eating habits. Almost all students state that they consume fruits and vegetables.

Key words: healthy eating, information, students, harmful food, healthy foods

INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating can be defined as a balanced intake of food to meet the physiological needs of the body. The way of eating is determined by the age, the sex, the physical and/or mental work that is fulfilled by each individual and it can differ in order to ensure normal growth, employability and creating prerequisites for good health and life.

A balanced intake of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals with or without cooked food and distribution of meals during the day is a premise for maximizing the health and the quality of life.

In recent decades people are constantly talking about healthy eating and lifestyle but also we see every day promoted a number of foods that are

full of fats, sugar, salt, preservatives. It is also a fact that the sedentary lifestyle and the lack of exercise are typical not only for adults but also for children and young people.

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In 2004 on the 57th session of the General Meeting of the World Health Assembly of all member states (including Bulgaria) the 'Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health' was accepted. As a way of prevention of these problems at the national level some regulations for nutrition related mainly to children and youth have been created. Our country is implementing the National Action Plan 'Food and Nutrition 2005 - 2010. We act Ordinance № 23 on the dietary guidelines for the population (State Gazette No. 63 of 2005.) There we can find the basic dietary guidelines for the population of the Republic of Bulgaria. It includes the recommended values and ranges for the diet. They are used in:

1. Defining of the national dietary policy;
2. Assessment of the individual food intake and the dietary intake of different population groups;
3. Development of dietary guidelines for individuals and groups;
4. Planning and control of the organized feeding groups.(4)

Students belong to the group of adults over 18 years and the biggest part of them is at the age of 18 to 26. They are a particular social group characterized by predominant mental work (as researchers, teachers, etc.), specific sleep mode (sessions, holidays) and complete physical and neuro- psychical development.

Table 1. Average energy needs of the elderly population

| Age | Physical activity | Average energy needs | | | |
|---------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| | | мъже | | жени | |
| | | KJ /day | kcal /day | KJ /day | kcal /day |
| 19 - 30 | low | 11,3 | 2710 | 8,5 | 2041 |
| | medium | 12,8 | 3071 | 9,7 | 2313 |
| | high | 14,3 | 3432 | 10,8 | 2586 |

The specific characteristics of the mental work often combine with low physical activity, which increases during the exam preparation. At this time the body needs more glucose as it is the main energy source for the brain. That's why the healthy eating and the balanced intake of foods are essential to provide sufficient energy for the body but at the same time it is important to avoid high energy intake at low energy consumption. For medium energy needs of students are accepted around 2300-2750 kkal/24ch.

In the process of their training the students from the direction 'Health Care' learn in various disciplines of their theoretical and practical studies the principles and rules of the rational diet for different patients with various diseases and age groups. They also acquire skills and knowledge of health promotion and prevention. At the beginning of their training the information about healthy eating and lifestyle is received from their family, friends, internet, etc. Generally speaking the taste preferences, the family traditions in eating, the changing conditions of life and the motivation influence a

lot the lifestyle and the nutrition habits amongst young people.

Purpose:

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

In an anonymous survey 40 students from the first year of 'Nurse' in the Trakia University were involved. The survey was conducted in 2014 year. The survey data were processed with mathematical and graphical methods – Microsoft Office Excel 2003.ink.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The principles of healthy eating are the basis on which everyone can build a diet according to their taste preferences, motivation, awareness and living conditions. Over half of respondents (60%) stated in the reply that they know these principles and 37.5% said that they are only partly aware of them.

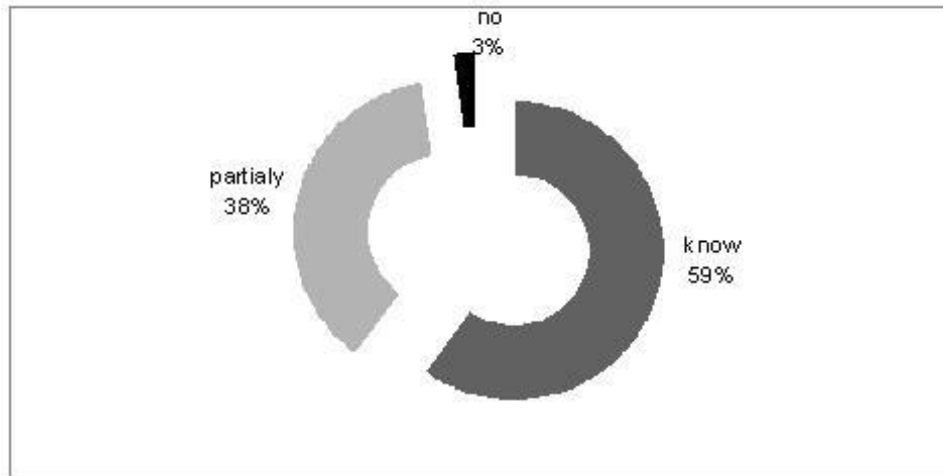


Figure 1. Awareness of students about the principles of healthy eating

As a major source of information on healthy eating outside disciplines is the Internet- 67, 5%, 45% friends, family -27, 5%, and 25% indicated other sources such as books, movies, fitness

instructors and others. Unfortunately relatively low percentage (27.5 %) of young people has received information from the family.

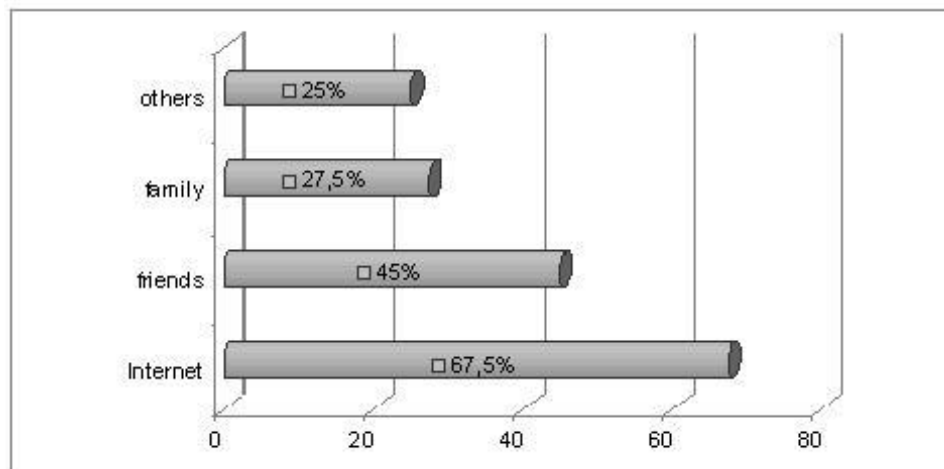


Figure 2. Main sources of information

The reasons may be of different nature – unawareness of the principles of healthy eating, family traditions in nutrition, outdated models and understanding of the utility of certain foods contrary to modern lifestyles, lack of funds and others. On the other hand we reach to the conclusion that students are active and find the necessary information alone. Therefore, the development of projects and programs at national and regional level would be useful for the whole population to improve health education, information and applying the principles of a healthy lifestyle.

A part of the students from the first years of their studies (35%) have stated that they have received information on healthy eating from the course 'Introduction to Philosophy of Nursing - Theoretical Basis' and 25% from 'Promotion of Health'. In the coming semesters the future medical professionals will expand their knowledge about diet and nutrition studying a number of other disciplines. The training of the medical professionals according to Kr. Miteva should be focused to 'develop the ability to independently solve various problems in health care based on the own social and practical

experience of the students (3). Thus the acquired through vocational training knowledge including healthy eating and lifestyle will be promoted and implemented by the future medical professionals among different population groups in the delivery of health care.

The freshmen were asked if they follow the principles of healthy eating and the following results were received: the highest percentage of the respondents (75.5%) answer that they follow partly the principles of healthy eating, 17.5% of them said that they follow them strictly and 10 % stated that they do not. A part of the respondents who said they follow the principles partially or not at all explained they position - 17.5% indicated that they like food and have insufficient time. Other leading causes (average 10 %) are the lack of motivation and cooking facilities and that the taste of healthy food is quite unpleasant sometimes. In their study E. Zheleva Kr Miteva state that 'a healthy lifestyle is a determined and deliberate choice of the future medical professionals, it is a voluntary

process' (2). When this choice is made on the basis of self – achieved conclusions and professional knowledge of the healthy lifestyle this symbiosis will positively affect the future professional activities of the health specialists and their lifestyle.

In the recent years we see continuously advertised on TV, radio, the Internet and billboards some food products, whose quality and ingredients are contrary to the requirements and standards of healthy eating for infants, adolescents and adults. In the survey there was a question included which required that students list which of the 'harmful' food products they consume most frequently. On the first place - 45% of respondents indicated that they often consume confectionery, 35% of them - chips and 20 % - fried food (potatoes, meatballs and etc.) and bakeries. The next group (15%) stated that they use quickly prepared food (Fast food), famous brand carbonated drinks, sausages; others (7%) say they consume soda drinks and margarine.

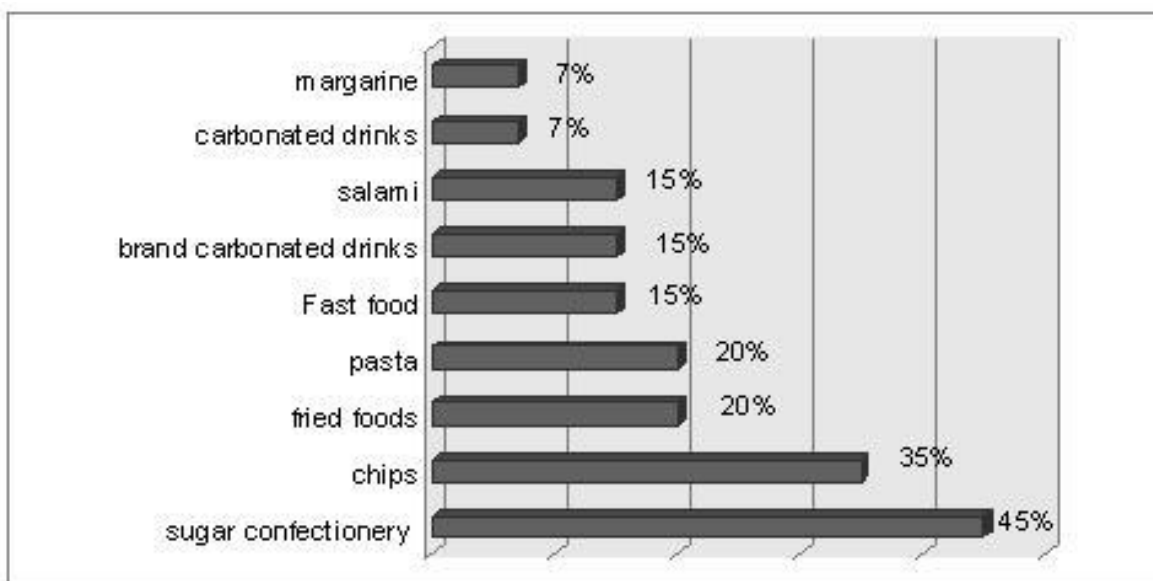


Figure 3. Most commonly consumed "harmful food"

Most of these products are high in calories. It is important to know that it is the lack of balance between the energy that we import into the body through food and the energy expenditure that leads to obesity and the development of certain diseases. It is encouraging that young people realize the mistakes they allow in their diet.

Logically, in the survey there was a question about what kinds of food are 'healthy' according to the perceptions of the respondents. Most of them indicate fruits (82.5%) and vegetables (77.5%), some say dairy products are useful (27.5%), yoghurt (10%), meat (12.5%), at about 10% collect nuts, beans, eggs, and 5% indicated a specific brand of widely advertised margarine.

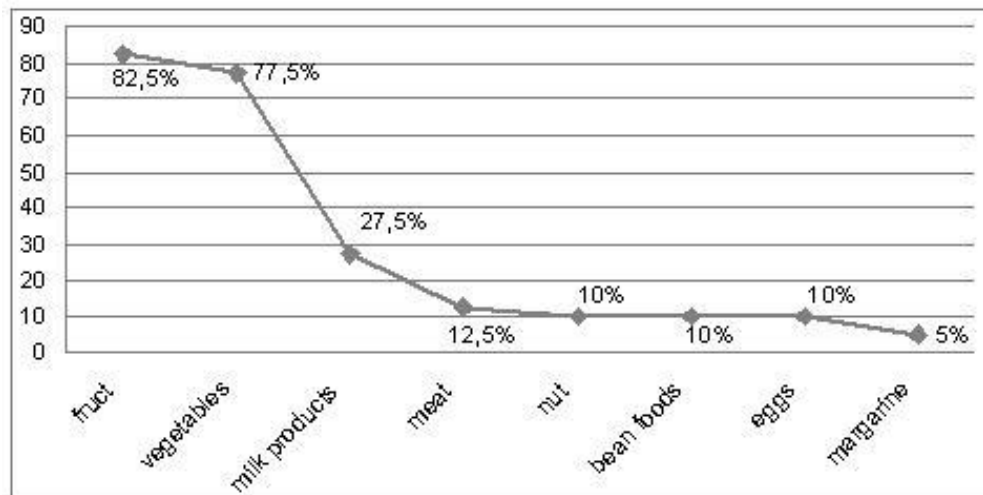


Figure 4. Most commonly consumed "healthy foods"

The results of the analysis of the opinion of the respondents about 'healthy' and 'harmful' food products are expected having in mind the background of general advertising of certain products and brands but it is obvious that they are also influenced by the information in various media about hazardous and harmful food products and the promotion of healthy living practices and nutrition.

CONCLUSION

The survey found that the future health professionals have a relatively high level of awareness of the useful and harmful food products. Although only a few people (17.5%) really follow all the principles of healthy eating it is good to discover that 75% of them use them partially. On the base of that we came to the following conclusion:

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