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The Impact of Food Allergy Education for Nursing Students

Aleksandra Redko MA

University of Windsor, redkoa@uwindsor.ca

Dennis L. Jackson PhD

University of Windsor, djackson@uwindsor.ca

Lori Buchanan PhD

University of Windsor, buchanan@uwindsor.ca

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Abstract

In community food allergy-related emergency situations, students from health, science and criminal justice-related programs are more willing and ready to act than those from other programs (Kagan, 2019). However, despite training in dietary needs and food allergies (FA), healthcare professionals such as physicians often request additional education and resources to assist patients (Carlisle et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2006). An allergy-related magazine article by Gagné (2018), highlighted the experiences of patients whose hospital care was impacted by overlooked FA needs. Sources for hospital dietary mistakes included patient records not being followed and errors in recording patient allergy information (Wallace, 2015). Absent from literature is an understanding of how FA nursing instruction affects general care patients with FA receive. The goal of the present study was to address this absence as it relates to nursing students' education and to understand how competency and knowledge interact with FA education. Nursing students in Years 1-4 at a university in Southern Ontario responded to an 18-item modified Willingness & Readiness to React in a Food Allergic Emergency in a community setting questionnaire (Kagan, 2018), and to open-ended questions about a patient care vignette involving a patient with FA in hospital. Conventional Content Analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to develop themes from the written vignette responses based on common discussion points, which identified how student nurses anticipated providing care to the patient. Identified within student responses was that certain tasks must occur when caring for the patient with FA in hospital. Additionally, individuals like the patient and the hospital staff (e.g., a nurse), were identified as having responsibilities to create a safe hospital stay in this scenario. General findings identify areas to support nursing students regarding FA education and will add to current literature around FA education for health care workers.

Keywords: food allergies, nursing students, food allergy education, allergy prevention, shared responsibilities

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