Identifying Web-based Resources on Toddler Nutrition and Feeding for Staff of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.

Amanda. L. Croll, B.S., Dietetic Intern, Department of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland;

Kathleen Pellechia, RD, Nutrition Information Specialist, WIC Works Resource System, Food and Nutrition Information Center, USDA, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD.

Learning Outcome:

To identify key nutrition topics associated with the toddler age group and to be familiar with appropriate Web-based resources to address these issues in a WIC clinic setting.

Abstract:

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Works Resource System is an online education and training program for WIC staff. The Web site and associated resources are managed by dietitians who also provide specialized, supervised practice rotations to dietetic interns in information technology and management.

In reviewing the Web site, an information gap was identified between resources addressing infant nutrition and feeding concerns and those addressing the young child; specifically for the time period between 12 months and 2 years of age. An evaluation of the resources on the existing Web pages was completed and a review of the literature was performed to determine the key nutrition and feeding topics that would be important to this age group. The review showed significant milestones existed during this time span, and thus it was determined that a new section of the Web site be developed to meet this need.

Three Web pages were designed using Macromedia Dreamweaver: General Information, Picky Eaters and Special Dietary Needs. Each topic page contains specific resources that can be printed out and used by WIC staff when addressing client issues. For example, the Special Dietary Needs section addresses issues of food allergies. The topic pages were added to the WIC Works Web Site and marketed to WIC staff using various electronic listservs and discussion groups.

Helping to develop and upload content information to a Web site is a practical application of intern information technology training and provides professional educators with additional resources.

Background:

As part of the University of Maryland College Park Dietetic Internship, each intern completes a six week rotation at the Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC), of the USDA National Agricultural Library (NAL).

The Information Technology (IT) rotation teaches the intern how to develop Web pages as well as utilize other technology tools to disseminate nutrition information.

Project:

WIC Works Resource System homepage, found at www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks.

A review of the WIC Works Web Site showed a lack of resources regarding the toddler age group between 12 months and 2 years of age. The few toddler age resources that existed seemed misplaced in both the infant and child Web pages.

After reviewing the literature related to infant nutrition and health and identifying key topic areas, a Web-based search for electronic resources was completed.

The resources were divided into three categories:

- General Information
- Picky Eaters
- Special Dietary Needs

The category of Picky Eaters was included because food jags are very common in the toddler age group. The Special Dietary Needs category was developed for food allergies and celiac disease.

A majority of the resource links selected, such as the one above, were PDF files which are quick and easy to print and use as a handout in classes or counseling sessions. Other resources link to Web sites of reputable organizations and/or research foundations.

Conclusion:

In the ever-changing world of nutrition, reviewing and updating resources is necessary to promote proper child nutrition. Posting education and training materials on the WIC Works Web site allows all WIC staff members to access the most current and reliable information for clientele. Intern involvement enhances the development of skills in information technology and management; as well as promotes and encourages the increased use of the internet to disseminate nutrition information.

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