

ABSTRACT

Modification of Behaviour of Healthcare Professionals by Continuing Professional Development

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With the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases in the Caribbean, this dissertation evaluates the knowledge, attitudes and practice change following training of healthcare professionals in the use of a protocol for the nutritional management of obesity, diabetes and hypertension. The healthcare professionals in the study worked in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. The study investigates how behaviour change of healthcare professionals can facilitate better metabolic control of patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.

The training in the use of the protocol was conducted using team setting and inter-professional education. An evaluation of knowledge and practice change was conducted using pre- and post-training questionnaires, key informant interviews and a patient chart audit. Additionally a sample of patients from Jamaica was followed for 24 months post-training, to evaluate changes in their metabolic and anthropometric control.

All of the healthcare professionals showed a statistically significant improvement in knowledge post-training and overall the professionals stated that they felt they had improved their counselling techniques and felt better equipped to explain the risk factors to their clients. The improvement in quality of care was seen in all chart audits with an increase in anthropometric measurements, biochemical testing, counselling and referral. At 24 months after training the Jamaica patient cohort showed a statistically significant weight change (loss of 3.4kg), an average decrease of 0.8% in HbA1c and an average increase of 0.1mmol/l of HDL cholesterol.

This research shows that continuing professional development can improve knowledge, attitudes and practice of healthcare professionals and that this leads to a better and improved service delivery which is reflected in better quality of care and quality of life for persons living with diabetes. A high level of quality of care throughout the Caribbean region is important to achieve the targets set in the 2007 Port of Spain Declaration.

Keywords: Godfrey Carmel Xuereb, Nutrition; Diabetes; Hypertension; Obesity; Healthcare Professional; Continuing Professional Development and Caribbean.