

**AN ASSESSEMENT OF THE FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYEES AT
FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS LOCATED ON THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST
INDIES, ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS**

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Background: Food borne illness is a very serious issue from which no one is immune. It has the potential to cause large-scale deaths in a short period of time and is particularly threatening to children, the elderly, expectant mothers, and persons with compromised immunity. This highlights the need for proper food safety practices, since food borne contaminants are introduced to foods when food handling practices are substandard.

Objective: This study sought to assess the food safety knowledge of employees at food establishments located at the St. Augustine Campus of the UWI.

Design: The study was conducted by administering a questionnaire which examined the major areas of food safety personal hygiene, contamination, cleaning and sanitation, time and temperature control, and receiving and storage practices.

Results: The relationship between employee education level and food safety knowledge was tested and the result prove that it was weak but direct. Another test for relationship between length of employment and food safety knowledge yielded a different result since it was proven to be indirect but stronger than education level. A third test to compare the mean knowledge scores between groups of trained and untrained persons in food safety, prove that there was no difference, implying that food safety training had no statistically significant effect on knowledge. Employees' knowledge was generally poor since more than 60% scored below 50% on the questions presented.

Conclusion: Recommendations for increasing food safety knowledge involved the restructuring of the food safety training systems to introduce practical and theoretical components, the

introduction of regular or seasonal training sessions in food handling, and managers introducing food safety management systems, services and resources.