

EVALUATION OF THE USE AND UNDERSTANDING OF NUTRITIONAL FOOD LABELS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS AT U.W.I, ST AUGUSTINE

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Background: Aramouni (2006) stated that “All food labels bear the name of the food product, net contents, and name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor. Other components of the label vary”. According to Mahan et al (2008) the basic requirements contained in all food label are product, generic name, brand name, net weight of contents, manufacturer’s or distributor’s name and address , ingredients declaration listed in descending order, based on their weight , product dates, nutritional labeling and other information trademark, symbols and allergen claims.

Objectives :(1)To determine the prevalence of food labels use among UWI students at St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago.(2)To identify the pattern of use of food label in University students.(3) To asses students knowledge, attitude and understanding of the information on a Nutritional Food Label.

Design: This study administered a questionnaire to 100 University students at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus. The original sample population was 100 students; it was later revised to 92 students. The students’ age ranged from 18 to 55+ with the majority of the students (81.5%) being between the ages 18 – 24. The gender was nearly evenly distributed with 47 women and 45 men. To make inferences from the instrument SPSS 16 was used to analyze the responses from the instrument. To assess students’ knowledge, attitude and understanding of the information on a Nutrition/ Food Label frequencies, percentages and means were calculated. Correlation, chi square, t test and regression were all use in analyze data.

Results: Analysis of data revealed the majority of students (85.9%) were familiar with nutritional food labels. A few students (14.1%) were not familiar with nutritional labels however they knew about calories and information on ingredients:

Conclusion: This study provides an introductory analysis into students' knowledge and understanding of food labels. It can be generally agreed that they understand food labels. Our study showed that students had a basic knowledge of what is a food label and was able to identify facts from falsehoods, however there were challenges with analyzing complex tasks such as when the % Daily value of nutrients in a product is 5% or less.