



Need for Distance Education in Nutrition and Dietetics during COVID-19 Pandemic

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DESCRIPTION

Distance learning is required due to the coronavirus epidemic 2019 pandemic, and this forced a long overdue technology shift in higher education. The two goals of this narrative review are to assess the impact of distance education on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of both nutrition and dietetics educators and their students as well as to provide recommendations for future education, research, and practise.

Like other educators, nutrition and dietetics teachers had to quickly adapt to delivering courses online, and most lacked the expertise and experience necessary to create and instruct online courses. Many students were badly impacted by the abrupt switch to online course delivery, especially dietetics students who were already under stress from the COVID-19 pandemic. During February and March 2021, a cross-sectional online survey was undertaken to ascertain how dietetics students perceived the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on their academic performance as well as their mental and physical wellbeing. The dietetics students who took part (n=526) were enrolled in either a Didactic Dietetics Program (DPD) or a Coordinated Dietetics Program for both the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021. In February 2021, the survey was sent to each DPD and Coordinated Program in Dietetics director listed on the website of the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). According to survey findings, 78% of students' courses for the fall 2020 semester were taken online. Because to the COVID-19 epidemic, 87% of dietetics students reported greater stress this semester, 64% reported mental health issues, and 32% reported disordered eating. Academically, the majority of pupils felt that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the standard of their education and that they had learnt less than usual during the fall of 2020. The majority of students did

concur that their programme satisfied their educational goals and that DPD courses could be successfully taught remotely or online. Although there may have been benefits for students who took their classes online during the pandemic, such as lower transportation costs, less stress from possible COVID-19 exposure, and higher grade point averages, preliminary research among students in the health professions highlights the detrimental effects of this sudden and abrupt switch to online learning on students' mental and physical health.

It's critical to distinguish between this sudden and hurried shift to online learning and deliberate, well-organized, and well-supported online learning. Distance learning has been an idea since the 19th century, and its definition has changed as technology has advanced. The delivery of continuing education courses over a telephone network marked the beginning of distance education in the dietetics sector in the 1970s. The notion of distant learning has evolved through time in large part as a result of technological advancements, particularly in the early 1990s with the availability and expanded access to personal computers and the commencement of widespread public use of the World Wide Web. Today, the majority of distant learning takes place online, and although the term "online learning" is frequently used, what is really intended is "online education," which better includes both the teaching and learning components. Because the review includes preonline programmes, this article refers to distant learning. The Department of Education amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 (effective July 1, 2021) to reflect the differences in terminology and technology and to clarify that distance education is distinct from correspondence courses because correspondence courses do not offer regular and substantive interaction.

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