

Family Living Programs

Providing Professionals with Current Information on Nutrition and Aging

Situation

As the U.S. population ages, high quality programs to prevent and treat nutrition-related chronic diseases are increasingly important. Professionals who work with health care agencies and organizations that provide community-based nutrition programs need reliable, evidence-based information on nutritional needs, educational resources, and dietary intervention strategies for their work with older adults.

Response

The annual “Current Concepts in Nutrition and Aging” conference is targeted at dietitians, nutrition program directors, nutrition educators, social workers, and other professionals who work with older adults. The program is designed to provide information and skills that care providers and educators can use in everyday practice. Between 150-200 dietitians and community nutrition professionals attend this conference in September each year. The conference is planned and co-sponsored by an interagency team from UW-Extension Family Living Programs, the UW-Madison Department of Nutritional Sciences, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network, and the UW-Madison Institute on Aging.

Among the topics covered at the 2005 conference were nutrition and oral health, nutrition support in trauma, health literacy, new Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid, end-of-life issues, and reducing risk of cardiovascular disease.

Outcomes

Over the years, program evaluations show that the conference overall rating averages about 4.5 on a 5-point scale with 5 being “excellent.” In 2005, about half (51%) of the participants had attended the previous year’s program. Those past participants were asked how they had applied the information from the previous year’s conference. Fifty-nine people responded. In comparison to other conferences they had recently attended, these participants indicated that they were able to apply a significant amount of the information from this conference to their work with older adults (4.2 on a 5-point scale with 5 being much more than average) and that they had attended an average of five of the conferences over the series’ 11-year history. The most important reason for attending this conference was “new knowledge not available elsewhere” (81%).

When asked how they had applied information from the previous year’s conference, the most common responses were:

- Sharing information with professional colleagues (76%)
- Directly discussing information with clients and/or their families (64%)
- Incorporating information into newsletter articles, handouts, other teaching/counseling resources (34%)

Some specific comments from the 2005 attendees were:

- Always good information from quality presenters!
- Wonderful conference, always top-notch speakers, great value for the money.
- This is the best conference I attend each year, I look forward to it because I can readily apply the information. Thank you for continuing to offer this quality conference.

Contact

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