

Epidemiology/Genetics Abstracts

Title: DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF A FOLIC ACID EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE WORKSITE

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Background: In the U.S. less than half of all women of childbearing age take a daily multivitamin containing folic acid (FA). To expand the educational reach beyond traditional health care settings, a toolkit was developed to teach employees about FA in the workplace.

Method: The effectiveness of a FA educational toolkit with regard to FA knowledge, awareness, and behavior was evaluated by four companies. Employees completed baseline surveys to assess knowledge and behavior regarding FA and multivitamin use. For four continuous weeks, each worksite promoted the health benefits of FA using the toolkit. Approximately four weeks after the end of program implementation, employees completed a post-program survey.

Results: A total of 314 employees from all worksites completed both surveys. Compared to baseline, there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who had heard of FA (76% versus 89%, $P<0.0001$) and had heard about FA through their place of employment post-program (19% versus 47%, $P<0.0001$). A composite knowledge score based on FA recommendations, health benefits, and food sources was significantly higher post-program compared to baseline ($P<0.0001$). Similar significant increases in awareness and knowledge were seen for women of childbearing age ($n=121$). A higher proportion of total respondents and women of childbearing age indicated that they take a multivitamin post-program compared to baseline, although the increase was not significant. Employees hearing about FA through their place of employment had higher knowledge scores ($P=0.0026$) and were more likely to make an effort to increase FA intake ($P=0.024$) or discuss the health benefits of FA with others ($P=0.011$) compared to employees hearing about FA other ways.

Conclusion: Results suggest that the FA worksite program was associated with increases in awareness and knowledge about FA and that the worksite may be an effective setting for FA education. Program funded by a grant from the March of Dimes Florida Chapter.