ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF CRITICAL CARDIOVASCULAR RISK INDICATORS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: DOES CAREER CHOICE MATTERS?

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Abstract: The health risk of college students in the United States of America is on the rise; with the significant increase in the prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors such as overweight and obesity, hypercholesterolemia and stress. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in both men and women, yielding a cost of approximately $475.3 billion yearly. The goals of this “know Your Numbers” study are: 1) to examine the level of awareness of college students knowing their numbers (critical health numbers); 2) to compare a college of pharmacy entry class with second semester college freshmen in terms of knowing their numbers. A cross-sectional study with a convenient sample of a college of pharmacy entry class (P1) and second semester and non-commuter freshman college students was conducted. The participants consented and completed a 15-item pre-test survey, which assessed knowledge of health-related numbers, health behaviors, and demographic information. T-tests, chi-square tests, analysis of variance and multiple logistic regressions were performed and tested at \( \alpha=0.05 \). Results: Awareness of their: cholesterol (7.2%), blood pressure [BP] (35.0%), glucose (8.1%), and body mass index [BMI] (41.9%) were low. Compared to the freshmen, the P1 students (P1’s) were more knowledgeable of: 1) their BP (27.8% vs. 45.6%, \( p=0.0098 \)); 2) the normal range for BP (62.9% vs. 74.4%, \( p=0.0156 \)); and 3) normal range for BMI (23.3% vs. 38.9%, \( p=0.0437 \)). The P1’s maintained a healthy diet at a lower percentage than the freshmen (35.6% vs. 63.9%, \( p < 0.0001 \)). The target population level of awareness of knowing their health related numbers was very low. Two or more years of a college education and/or choice of a health professional career made some difference in level of awareness. Further research is required to understand the low level of aware of critical health indicators among the target population.

Key Words: Cardiovascular disease (CVD), Know Your Numbers (KYN), Young Adults, College Students, Prevention

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