Occupational Approaches for Reducing Food Insecurity in College Students

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Occupational Approaches for Reducing Food Insecurity in College Students

Jessica Sabbara, OTS; Becki Cohill, OTD, OTR/L; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; Karen Park, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND
- Food insecurity is defined as "uncertain or limited access to adequate food resources" (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2020, para. 14).
- College students are at an increased risk of food insecurity because they typically work part-time, are less likely to receive federal nutrition assistance, and may have low food literacy (El Zein, et al., 2019; Owens, et al, 2020). Food insecurity in college is associated with a lower grade point average, lower self efficacy, and less time for buying or preparing food (McArthur et al., 2018).
- Occupational therapy (OT) practitioners can serve an important role in promoting engagement in food related occupations, food literacy, the skills needed to manage food resources, or occupations (Begley et al., 2018).
- OT practitioners reduce barriers and support participation in food related occupations (Juckett & Robinson 2019; Schmelzer & Leto, 2018).

PROBLEM STATEMENT
Food insecurity is not an issue that occurs in isolation. Traditional food provision programs rarely address psychosocial factors, food literacy, the skills needed to manage food resources, or occupations (Begley et al., 2019; Schmelzer & Leto, 2018).

NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS
All research participants (n=5) were classified as food insecure according to the U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (USDA, 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Food Literacy in College</th>
<th>Results of Needs Assessment Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Low food literacy associated with food insecurity (Begley et al., 2019).</td>
<td>Financial literacy, grocery budgeting, financial planning, and understanding loans/financial aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Participant 3 expressed challenges in planning, managing, selecting, preparing and eating nutrient dense meals.</td>
<td>Nutrition and Food Literacy Nutrition education, cooking skill tutorials, appropriate recipes, how to use and stretch food items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Are you satisfied with the way that you are obtaining or managing food now? &quot;Somewhat yeah. I mean but I feel like we can manage it better or just like buy more&quot; (Participant 3).</td>
<td>System/External Increase awareness on campus and in community. legislative, policy and funding support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Use the QR code to view the F.U.E.L. Resource Guide

DISCUSSION
This project
- Adds to literature on the role of occupational therapy for food insecurity.
- Identified need for OT to become more involved in health promotion and prevention.

Role of OT:
- Support food literacy and food security
- Adapt and modify to reduce personal, contextual or environmental barriers to occupation
- Advocate for people with food insecurity
- Support lifestyle modification and skill acquisition

Future research should continue to explore the role of OT in food security for emerging adults/college students at various institutions.

Please scan the QR code to view the references.