

Short Communication

Attitudes of Bahraini Nursing Students to Obesity

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A sample of 200 students in the College of Health Sciences in Bahrain were interviewed to determine their knowledge and attitudes towards obesity. In general, the nursing students have better knowledge and attitudes than secondary students. However, some unsound attitudes towards obesity exist, suggesting more nutrition education programme in the mass media to correct unsound beliefs related to obesity.

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Sound knowledge and attitudes toward health problems is an essential component for health curricula in medical and nursing schools. Studies in the Arabian Gulf states¹⁻³ showed that a large proportion of the community believes in unsound information regarding obesity and other chronic diseases. Therefore, one step to correct this unsound information is to include appropriate knowledge on health and diseases into the undergraduate curriculum. The objective of this study was to determine the knowledge and attitudes of Bahraini nursing students towards obesity.

METHODS

Nursing students in the College of Health Sciences in Bahrain were the target group of this study. The sample size comprised of 200 students with a mean age of 20.4 ± 3.1 years. The students were asked to answer a specially designed questionnaire consisting of eight statements regarding obesity as reported by Musaiger². The attitudes of students were measured using a three-point scale ranging from agree, do not know, to disagree. Data were entered in a D-base file and analysed using the EPI-INFO software programme⁴.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The attitudes of nursing students towards obesity are illustrated in Table 1. In general, nursing students have better knowledge and attitudes compared to secondary students in Bahrain¹, indicating that health curriculum in the College of Health Sciences may play a role in providing sound health and nutrition information. The highest percentage of agreement was observed in the statement "Sauna baths help in reducing the fat of the body" (33%), and the statement "plump women are more acceptable to men than non-plump women", (22.5%). These statements also received the highest proportion of "do not know", indicating that a relatively large percentage

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of nursing students needs further information to correct their attitudes to these statements. However, a high proportion of students studied disagreed with many unsound statements, especially those related to the drinking of water and obesity, skipping breakfast and eating one meal a day to reduce weight.

Table 1. Attitudes towards obesity by Bahraini nursing students

Attitudes	Agree %	Disagree %	Do not know %
Drinking a lot of water causes obesity	12.0	78.5	9.5
Skipping breakfast helps in reducing weight	3.0	93.0	4.0
Constricting the abdomen with clothes after delivery helps in reducing the fat in the abdomen	17.0	38.5	44.5
Sauna baths help in reducing the fat of the body	33.0	24.0	43.0
Drinking grapefruit juice helps in dissolving the fat in the body	16.5	22.5	61.0
Plump women are more acceptable to men than non-plump women	22.5	37.5	40.0
Tight clothes help in reducing weight	4.5	81.5	14.0
The best method to reduce weight is eating one meal a day	3.5	92.5	4.0

The belief that plump women are more acceptable to men still exists in Bahrain. This finding confirmed that by Musaiger in women in Oman⁵ and in female university students in the United Arab Emirates². This unsound belief may encourage some girls to keep their extra weight, which can lead to more accumulation of body fat in future. Mass media should play an important role in correcting unsound beliefs and attitudes toward obesity. Curricula in schools and colleges should contain adequate information to correct the wrong health and nutrition beliefs that are widely spread in the community.

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