Cooking for Salud®: A Culinary and Lifestyle Program for Older Adults: Assessing Impacts on Chronic Disease Biomarkers and Health Outcomes

Sabra A. Falquier Montg견, MD,1,2,3 Callie Brust, MPH, RDN, CHES;1 Jen Nation, MA;1 Patty Corona1

1. Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center, National City, CA; 2. Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group, San Diego, CA; 3. Sensations Salud, LLC, San Diego, CA

Background

Olivewood Gardens & Learning Center’s Cooking for Salud® is a 7-week lifestyle modification program that focuses on empowering the participants to change their food-related habits by participating in culinary instruction in a teaching kitchen centered around mindful eating, and mindfulness. Each week focuses on different aspects of nutritional knowledge and culinary skills that build on the previous weeks and features guest chefs leading hands-on cooking classes on site. Topics covered include plant-based cooking, alternative sugar-sweetened beverages, incorporating superfood-relevant vegetables and fruits into every meal, whole grains, knowledge of oil, whole and full-fat protein options, high protein meals, cooking on a budget, nutritional knowledge, effects of meal size and portion, and stress management. Participants improve their eating and cooking skills under the guidance of experienced instructors. The program is designed to improve the health of adult populations with a higher risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic conditions. The program’s unique approach to cooking education is known for its hands-on approach, allowing participants to practice and apply new skills in a fun and interactive environment.

Methods

- Participants were recruited during nutrition classes at local senior centers and senior living facilities.
- Recruited individuals 55+
- Effort was made to ensure culturally relevant food traditions were included.
- Qualitative data were collected via follow-up surveys to assess participants' experiences.
- Participants were measured pre and post intervention.

Results

- Participants were 55 years of age, 87% Hispanic/Latino, 40% below the poverty line, 87% Spanish as primary language, and 27% food insecure.
- 155/84 to 152/81, blood pressure decreased.
- 6.4% to 5.7%, HbA1c decreased.
- 54.00 to 61.00, HDL increased.
- 108.00 to 120.00, triglycerides decreased.
- Participants also reported increased personal and professional development, and community outreach.

Conclusions

- A culinary-based program can be utilized as an effective method for chronic disease prevention.
- Participants reported improved health outcomes, including decreased blood pressure and blood sugar levels.
- There was an increase in HDL cholesterol, and a decrease in triglycerides.
- The program positively impacted biomorphic data and behavioral change indicators.

Future Directions

- Reassess survey and biomorphic data at 6-12 months, 24 months, and 36 months after intervention.
- Include control group - a comparable group of individuals who do not participate in Cooking for Salud® program to be assessed under same measures in same time period.
- Include multiple Cooking for Salud® generations to increase participant number and follow for a longer time frame.
- Adaptable to be implemented in multiple locations to maintain program's cultural heterogeneity.
- Foster communication and recruitment methods for seniors after the program ends.
- Develop a log model and refine goals to specifically address the aging community.

Acknowledgements

- The Nonprofit Institute's Castor Center for evaluation
- The San Diego Foundation Age-Friendly Communities Program for funding support
- Kensington for their organization, teaching, and program support
- The Nonprofit Institute's Castor Center for evaluation

Olivewood Gardens would like to acknowledge:

- The Nonprofit Institute's Castor Center for evaluation
- The San Diego Foundation Age-Friendly Communities Program for funding support
- Kensington for their organization, teaching, and program support