



Food For Kids Mid North Coast Parents of babies and young children sharing nutrition and child feeding information: A peer educator model



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Aim

To determine the effectiveness of peer education for disseminating nutrition and child feeding information between parents of babies and young children.

Methods

Thirty four parents with infants aged between 0 and 3 years were recruited in 4 Mid North Coast NSW towns to attend workshops and receive nutrition and child feeding training and resources. Consenting participants adopted the role of Peer Nutrition Educators and disseminated the resource information over a 6 month period. Throughout the intervention period participants received additional resources and messages on nutrition and child feeding via a dedicated Facebook page and email. A mixed methods methodology was used to investigate the intervention. Quantitative data was collected via Facebook 'insights' and questionnaires at the conclusion of the intervention period and analysed using chi square and t tests. Qualitative data from semi structured phone and group interviews was collected and analysed thematically.

Results

At the conclusion of the six month intervention period 28 participants remained engaged as peer educators and 519 people were following the Food For Kids Mid North Coast Facebook page. Posts appeared on newsfeeds on 56,014 occasions and were interacted with (likes, comments, shares and post clicks) on 6133 occasions (11% interaction rate). Associations were found between increased parental child feeding self-efficacy and reach of information shared ($n=28$, $p=0.03$) and Facebook use and occasions of information sharing ($p=0.04$). Child feeding efficacy of participants increased significantly from pre to post study ($p<0.001$). The five main themes that emerged from the data from the peer educator experience were: influences on sharing; sharing mediums; the message and the pitch; trust in information and support.

Conclusions

This study provides evidence that peer education is an effective approach to disseminating nutrition and child feeding information, which potentially impacts positively on parents feeding practices, children's feeding behaviours and diet quality. Considering the modest resource investment required to implement peer education, this approach potentially offers a cost effective preventative strategy to address obesity and chronic disease.

Keywords - Child feeding, peer education, parent, nutrition, social media

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'

Richard Ball is an Accredited Practising Dietitian who has been working for The Mid North Coast Local Health District as a Health Promotion Officer since 2012. He is currently working on the Healthy Children Initiative program and has a keen interest in the extension of this program into the community.



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