From Garden to Table: Increasing Nutritional Knowledge, Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Adolescents with Psychiatric Disorders

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**Population:** 30 students (ages 12-18 years old) at LifeWorks NW Day Treatment Facility Program in Tigard, OR. Students have a variety of psychiatric disorders such as: Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Manic Depression, Drug/Alcohol Dependency, etc. Students have access to a garden at the facility, which may increase awareness, enthusiasm, and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

**Significance:** Individuals within this population are at high risk for inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption and low vitamin D status, contributing to: ↑ risky behaviors, ↓physical activity, poor immune systems, ↑anxiety, ↑depression, ↑seasonal affective disorder

**Goal #1:** To increase the nutritional knowledge and skills and increase fruit and vegetable consumption in adolescents (12-18 y/o) with psychiatric disorders.

**Goal #2:** To increase fruit and vegetable consumption in adolescents (12-18 y/o) with psychiatric disorders.

**Implementation**

**Nutrition Lecture:** Focused on ChooseMyPlate.gov guidelines, aimed to increase their nutritional knowledge. Students participated in an interactive nutrition lesson, where they discussed all five food groups and MyPlate appropriate guidelines. The pictures below represent students’ drawings based on their understanding of MyPlate.

**Cooking Demonstration:** Enhanced basic cooking skills and encouraged fruit and vegetable consumption in students. Students learned ways they can utilize the produce grown in their garden to make easy, wholesome meals.

**Cyclic Menu:** A cyclic menu was designed to provide well balanced, nutritious meals for students. This budget-friendly menu incorporates produce grown in their garden. Nutrient analysis was performed to ensure menu follows the DASH guidelines.

**Outcomes**

**Goal #1:**
- Majority of students were able to demonstrate how to prepare a meal that meets MyPlate.gov guidelines.
- Majority of students increased their nutrition knowledge post-evaluation test scores by at least a 10% in comparison to their pre-evaluations
- All students were able to demonstrate cooking skills utilizing LifeWork’s garden.

**Goal #2:**
- All students increased their fruit and vegetable consumption by the end of the project duration.
- Majority of students increased their fruit and vegetable consumption by 1 or more servings per day. This was determined by a fruit and vegetable consumption questionnaire.

**Takeaway Thoughts:** Allowing young adolescents with psychiatric disorders to get involved in the production of their own food may increase their willingness to try foods they may not have been willing to consume otherwise.