

Poster presentation

Vitamin and mineral supplements: a survey of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors among Southern Utah University students, faculty and staff

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Background

This study was performed to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of students, faculty, and staff of Southern Utah University related to vitamin and mineral supplementation.

Methods

An anonymous pencil-paper survey was administered on the campus of Southern Utah University (SUU). The survey was administered to 10% of SUU students ($n = 604$) during general education class time and was mailed through campus mail to 33.6% of full-time staff ($n = 152$) and full-time faculty members ($n = 81$) who were selected using a table of random numbers. The survey included questions regarding knowledge about, attitudes toward, and behaviors related to the use of vitamin and/or mineral supplements. Impact of gender, body mass index (BMI), level of education, age, and physical activity were examined since previous research has shown them to be related to vitamin and mineral supplement use. Approval from the SUU Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to administration of the survey. SPSS 13.0 for Windows was used for data analysis. Pearson chi square and frequencies were computed.

Results

Fifty seven percent of the mailed surveys were returned which resulted in a total of 736 subjects (604 students, 85 staff, 47 faculty; 42.4% male, 57.6% female). Chi square

tests revealed a significant difference between status (student, staff or faculty) and three of the four knowledge questions ($p < 0.05$); status and desire for more knowledge a propos vitamin/mineral supplements ($p = 0.029$); and status and use of calcium ($p < 0.001$), magnesium ($p = 0.003$), vitamin E ($p < 0.001$), and multivitamin ($p = 0.008$) supplements. Women were more likely to take folate supplements than men ($p = 0.002$), and women over the age of 45 were more likely to be taking a folate supplement ($p = 0.008$) and/or a multivitamin ($p = 0.001$) than women under the age of 45. Analysis revealed a significant difference between the use of vitamin/mineral supplements based on age ($p < 0.001$) and between age and two of the four of the knowledge questions ($p < 0.05$). Women were more likely to use supplements than men ($p = 0.004$) and individuals who exercise more frequently were more likely to take vitamin/mineral supplements ($p = 0.031$). BMI and level of education were not significantly related to vitamin/mineral supplement use.

Conclusion

The data support conclusions of previous studies showing that age, gender, and physical activity are related to vitamin/mineral supplement use. They also indicate that there is a lack of knowledge regarding vitamin and mineral supplements, and that a desire to receive more information about vitamin/mineral supplementation exists in this population. In the future, an effort can be made to

provide information to this population about vitamin/
mineral supplements.

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