Effectiveness of the Oncology Nutrition Community Programs

In 2015 Community Nutrition Programs were presented to meet the Commission on Cancer prevention standard, 4.1. The information in each presentation was based on the eight dietary changes in the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommendations, published in September 2014\(^1\) and research from the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), suggesting the need to decrease obesity to improve cancer outcome and risk of recurrence.\(^2\) All programs had maximum attendance.

These programs were designed to provide information to help healthy individuals, survivors and late-stage cancer patients to easily implement the AICR guidelines in regards to dietary changes appropriate to their health status. The programs provided lists of foods to increase or decrease, recommendations for minutes of exercise per week, tips on how to incorporate foods into diet, and the importance of obtaining and maintaining healthy body weights. For healthy individuals, the focus was to decrease overall cancer rates through diet and lifestyle. For late stage patients, the emphasis was on a healthy and appropriate diet to maintain weight and healthy nutrient stores.

At all the programs, the oncology dietitian’s contact information was provided for participants to follow-up with individual nutrition consults. In addition, at the start of each program, participants registered with their contact information. The program director sent emails or phone calls encouraging one-on-one follow-up consults. Fourteen individuals were seen for follow up nutrition consults as a result of attending one of the programs. Each person was evaluated through interview and diet diaries to determine if they had modified attitude or behavior about good nutrition, physical activity or healthy weight. Of the participants seen by the dietitian, 100% had implemented at least 2 or more dietary or lifestyle changes as a result of attending the program. These may have included: increasing fruits and vegetables consumed daily, decreasing animal fats, eating a more plant based diet, limiting alcohol. In addition, 100% had changed or gained knowledge in regards to importance of nutrition, healthy weight and physical activity.

Based on these results, it is recognized that there is a need for more robust data collection to demonstrate program effectiveness at increasing knowledge about prevention through nutrition. More aggressive follow-up will be implemented to increase the number of participants who are seen for follow-up nutrition consults.
