

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The two primary objectives of this study were to assess the effectiveness and feasibility of video instruction as a means of delivering nutrition education to low-income homemakers. Monitoring of the household VCR status and telephone access of homemakers entering EFNEP and SCNEP indicated that a substantial number of homemakers have the means by which to receive video instruction. Traditional instruction and video instruction were effective in improving the dietary intakes and food behaviors of homemakers. Video instruction was found to be as effective as traditional instruction in promoting dietary and behavior change. Moreover, video instruction was dramatically less expensive than traditional instruction. In addition, the decreased hours of Program Assistant (PA) time required to deliver the video lessons indicates that PAs may be able to maintain a larger caseload when using video instruction.

A third objective of this study was to identify low-income homemakers' perceptions of the video lessons and to provide insight into the future use and development of video instruction. The majority of participants liked receiving video lessons, however, several homemakers found the videos boring or lacking information. While these responses may be partially generated by the study requirement of a pre-determined number and type of lesson, videos that are more visually exciting and engaging seem necessary. The inclusion of food demonstrations and "live" actors rather than still pictures seems to offer the greatest potential in regards to behavior modeling and skill building.

A fourth objective was to identify organizational and technical problems associated with the distribution and retrieval of video lessons. Disadvantages of the video instruction included the inability to reach participants by telephone for lesson discussions and the interruption or cessation of lessons due to VCR disrepair or loss. Only two of the twelve PAs reported experiencing difficulty retrieving videos from participants. Most felt that home visits would be the best way to deliver and retrieve video lessons in the future. Although, some PAs identified local WIC offices and supermarkets as alternative drop-off locations. In general, the majority of PAs felt that video lessons were effective in delivering nutrition education.

This study also attempted to identify certain characteristics of participants that may have influenced their ability to make dietary improvements following instruction. However, race, age, residence, locus of control, and cooking reinforcement value (RV) did not have an effect on the amount of change in dietary intake or food behaviors from pre to post intervention. Although, the fact that some participants left the study in order to receive traditional lessons implies that individual learning styles or some other characteristics of the participants may influence success with this type of instruction.

Recommendations for the Use of Video Instruction in EFNEP and SCNEP

1. Since video instruction was well received by both PAs and participants and was equally as effective in changing dietary intakes and food behaviors as traditional instruction, consideration should be given to using video instruction on a wider scale in Virginia EFNEP and SCNEP. Considering the need to follow the tested structured procedure for administering video instruction, PAs should receive training before employing this method.
2. Homemakers should be given the option of receiving video instruction or traditional instruction. The use of video instruction should be based upon the needs and preferences of the homemakers.
3. Video lessons should be used preferably over other untested means (unstructured mailings, etc.) of delivering lessons to “hard-to reach” homemakers.
4. Face-to-face visits should be used to deliver and retrieve the video lessons. However, video drop-off boxes placed at WIC offices or supermarkets may be a potential back-up system for video retrieval. This would allow for the anonymous return of videotapes if a homemaker drops out of the program.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Focus groups with low-income homemakers should be conducted in order to gather additional feedback regarding the type and qualities they would like to receive in the videotapes.
2. Testing of the effectiveness of different video presentation formats (i.e. “live” actor versus still pictures) needs to be done in order to develop videos that facilitate the greatest behavior change.
3. The cultural appropriateness of the videos should be better evaluated through the use of either focus groups or participant surveys.
4. The effectiveness of video instruction with other minority groups needs to be assessed.
5. Alternative strategies to generate interaction with the participant between intermittent home visits should be developed and the effectiveness compared to the use of the telephone discussions.
6. The long-term retention of dietary and food behavior changes requires additional study. Research designed to assess dietary intakes and food behaviors at pre and post intervention as well as a six or twelve-month follow-up visit should be conducted.
7. The potential for using video instruction nationwide should be explored. Similar studies conducted with EFNEP participants in other states would provide insight into the effectiveness of video instruction in other areas of the United States.

8. Further study regarding the use of the Pennsylvania State Behavior Checklist question categories as factors, as well as additional reliability testing, needs to be conducted with a larger sample size.
9. The RVs for participating in EFNEP and SCNEP need to be identified and tested with low-income homemakers to determine if they are more predictive of behavior change than the RVs currently a part of the Pennsylvania State Behavior Checklist.