

Southwestern University Health and Wellness Program Initiative

LAURA A. CARRASCO TORRES, TAYLOR P. HUBBARD, & VANESSA MIKAN, PHD

Human Performance Laboratory; Kinesiology; Southwestern University; Georgetown, TX

Category: Undergraduate

Advisor / Mentor: Mikan, Vanessa (mikanv@southwestern.edu)

ABSTRACT

Employee wellness programs (EWPs) foster a sense of community within the workplace and have been found to improve job satisfaction, healthy behaviors, and long-term health for employees (Merrill et al., 2011 and Goetzel et al., 2014). A successful EWP must address the diverse background of their employees and educate them on the importance of good health and encourage healthy habits (Goetzel et al., 2014 and Castillo et al., 2019). **PURPOSE:** To provide interactive education sessions to promote healthy active lifestyle behaviors for both part- and full-time staff at Southwestern University. **METHODS:** Health education sessions were provided to part- and full-time staff over 3 health related topics (Physical Activity, Low Back Care, and Diabetes Nutrition) with two sessions held per topic. Participants were recruited through flyers, emails, and word of mouth. All recruitment efforts and health education sessions were delivered in both Spanish and English. Each session consisted of a Pre-Assessment of Knowledge (P-AK1), a 20-minute presentation over the topic led by the researchers, a Post-Assessment of Knowledge (P-AK2), and an interactive activity related to the topic. Incentive items were provided at each session. One-on-one interviews were conducted with non-participating staff from select departments to collect qualitative data on (a) barriers of participation, (b) interest in topics/sessions, and (c) suggestions for future consideration. Two-tailed paired samples t-tests and Cohen's d were used to determine the significance and effect size of the topic presentation on P-AK1 and P-AK2 scores. Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. **RESULTS:** There was a statistically significant difference found between the P-AK1 and P-AK2 mean scores for the Low Back Care ($t(6) = 0.962, p < 0.05$) and Diabetes Nutrition ($t(10) = 0.961, p < 0.05$). Further analysis proved presentations influenced the Assessment of Knowledge scores for physical activity (Cohen $d = 0.768$), low back care (Cohen $d = 1.360$), and diabetes nutrition (Cohen $d = 1.223$). Thematic analysis from interviews revealed (a) timing was a barrier for attendance ($n=6$), (b) topics/sessions were of interest ($n=6$), and (c) suggestions were given on how to increase the accessibility of these sessions ($n=3$). **CONCLUSION:** Overall, participants and interviewed staff found value in the Health Education Sessions, and presentations were found to have influenced the participant's level of knowledge. These positive efforts are aligned with current wellness initiatives on campus that are aimed to enhance the health-related quality of life in our campus community.