

Online Nutrition Education: WIC in the 21st Century

A rigorous evaluation of the relative impact of online versus traditional clinic-based modes of delivering nutrition education in WIC has not been conducted. Effective online education with low-income populations has the potential for increased exposure to quality education, improved efficiency and cost, and positive impact in WIC. We hypothesize that women in WIC receiving online nutrition education will score as well as or better than women receiving clinic-based group nutrition education on change in knowledge, self-efficacy, stage of change, and behaviors, and that women will rate the online nutrition education as more convenient than clinic-based group education. Further, we hypothesize that the cost per participant of WIC nutrition education delivered online will be less than for clinic-based group nutrition education. To test these hypotheses we will conduct a randomized, comparison trial (online versus group nutrition education) among a sample of 600 pregnant women in WIC and 600 mothers of 1- to 5-year-olds in WIC from three local WIC clinics in California. We will survey WIC participants at three time points: baseline (pre-education), immediately following education (post-education) and 3 months later (follow-up). We will test two nutrition education topics: breastfeeding promotion with pregnant women in WIC, and child breakfast eating with mothers of children in WIC. We will leverage years of ongoing collaborative research on WIC between UC Berkeley and Public Health Foundation Enterprises (PHFE) WIC, and build upon investments by PHFE WIC in an online nutrition education delivery system in place since 2012. Findings from this study will be useful in supporting expansion of online nutrition education in WIC and beyond.

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