

Title

Experiences and impacts of a hospital-based, Spanish-language teaching kitchen and garden on staff and participants

Abstract

Background

Teaching kitchens (TKs) and gardens based in healthcare institutions have been identified as settings for innovative, nonmedical interventions to improve health outcomes related to type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases. However, few studies have assessed the acceptability and effectiveness of these strategies among specific priority populations like the Latinx community who often experience increased levels of social need due to longstanding structural factors that impinge on health and wellbeing.

Since 2016, the Providence Community TK has offered health education classes, food insecurity screening, and supplemental food assistance to the Portland metropolitan region. The Providence Community TK expanded its programming to include a culturally responsive Spanish-language pilot program that includes interventions in both the Community TK and garden. The pilot took place in partnership with Growing Gardens, a local community-based organization (CBO) focused on empowering low-income community members to grow healthy food.

Objective

The evaluation aimed to understand experiences with the pilot program and its impacts on staff and participants.

Methods

Using a mixed methods approach, the study collected data from staff interviews (n=5), participant surveys (n=55), and Photovoice (n=7), which is a participatory method that uses participants' photos to guide focus group discussions to answer evaluation questions. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and quantitative data were analyzed descriptively.

Results

The evaluation identified positive program effects on staff and participants, including a sense of community, genuine enjoyment, increased knowledge and skills, positive impacts on wellbeing, new perspectives, and a ripple of positive effects on participants' family, friends, and community.

Conclusion

Staff and participants engaged in the Spanish-language pilot program at the Providence Community TK reported overwhelmingly positive experiences in the program. These findings suggest the value of initiatives to develop trusted relationships between healthcare partners, CBOs, and historically underserved communities through culturally and linguistically relevant programming to advance health equity.