

Medical education... in a kitchen –

Teaching dysphagia and culinary medicine through a care food experiential workshop

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Background and Objectives

In Hong Kong, the prevalence of dysphagia in older adults has been shown to be as high as 57.1% in aged care facilities. [1] Swallowing difficulties present challenges including malnutrition, dehydration, aspiration pneumonia, unpleasant mealtime experience. It is essential for medical students to learn about nutritional and psychological needs of this population.

Culinary medicine is a trending field that combines science and culinary arts to create food that is delicious, appealing, and promotes wellness. [2] Scholars believe that hands-on cooking sessions could made a greater impact over traditional lectures for teaching nutrition and dietetics in medical schools. A U.S. study found a hands-on cooking and nutrition elective significantly improved student attitudes and competencies in counselling patients. [3]

The objectives of this project are for medical students to better understand the challenges to ageing well brought by dysphagia, to gain insight into ageing innovation as a potential remedy, and to reflect upon the myriad modalities of humanistic care from a patient perspective, all through a hands-on care food preparation workshop designed by a social enterprise.

Practice

As part of a Medical Humanities Programme at HKU, 20 Year 2 MBBS students received a workshop designed and led by *The Project Futurus*. Before class, students submitted photos on their interpretation of older patients' meals. The workshop comprised (i) introduction to Japanese Engay Food and its underlying person-centered care principles, followed by (ii) a hands-on experience using food gelling agents and moulds in creating their own softmeal dishes. Student feedback was collected afterwards.

Implications

Despite its small scale, this community partnership pioneers a novel culinary medicine workshop for medical students in Hong Kong. There is great potential internalizing this workshop within a medical curriculum. It is hoped that the hands-on pedagogical approach could also promote future doctors' appreciation of gerontechnology from other countries (e.g. Japan), and to raise student's interest in attending to the needs of older adults and end-of-life patients suffering from swallowing difficulties.

References

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