

A Sustainable Model For Community-Based Nutrition Education: Insights From The Nutrition Kitchen Project

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INTRODUCTION

- The Nutrition Kitchen Project (NKP) is a community health initiative at UCSD School of Medicine Student-Run Free Clinic.
- Established over a decade ago by a UCSD medical student, Marsha Gail Davis, NKP has survived numerous challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, evolving community partnerships, and student leadership transitions.
- Despite its current challenge of improving attendance rates, NKP remains dedicated to addressing health disparities through community-based nutrition education.
- Underserved populations often exhibit lower health literacy, which is linked to poorer health outcomes (1). Evidence suggests dietary education plays a pivotal role in improving eating patterns and health outcomes (2).
- NKP emphasizes practical and culturally-tailored dietary interventions, recognizing lifestyle modifications as effective means of managing chronic conditions where definitive treatments are limited (3).

OBJECTIVE

- Empower patients with knowledge and skills to adopt sustainable dietary and lifestyle changes that improve health and well-being. Additionally, the program aims to foster positive and engaging discussions about health, thereby enhancing patient retention and program impact.
- To promote sustainability, NKP leverages partnerships with local recreation centers, food distribution programs, and clinic personnel to secure educational spaces, procure equipment and food supplies, and garner patient interest.

Program Design

NKP sessions are held monthly and include:

1. Educational Presentations –Health topics are often selected and customized based on patients’ collective preferences. To maximize accessibility, lessons are presented in patients’ primary language, Spanish. Additionally, presentations prioritize practical, actionable advice over scientific jargon to enhance understanding and encourage implementation.
2. Culinary Demonstrations – Hands-on preparation of recipes are often tailored to the session’s topic. Recipes emphasize affordable, nutritious ingredients typically obtained for free through a partnership with food rescue organization, Feeding San Diego.
3. Patient Engagement and Personalization – Interactive discussions encourage participants to share personal experiences and apply lessons to their own lives. Participants are solicited for input at the end of each session regarding topics of interest for future sessions.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Stakeholders

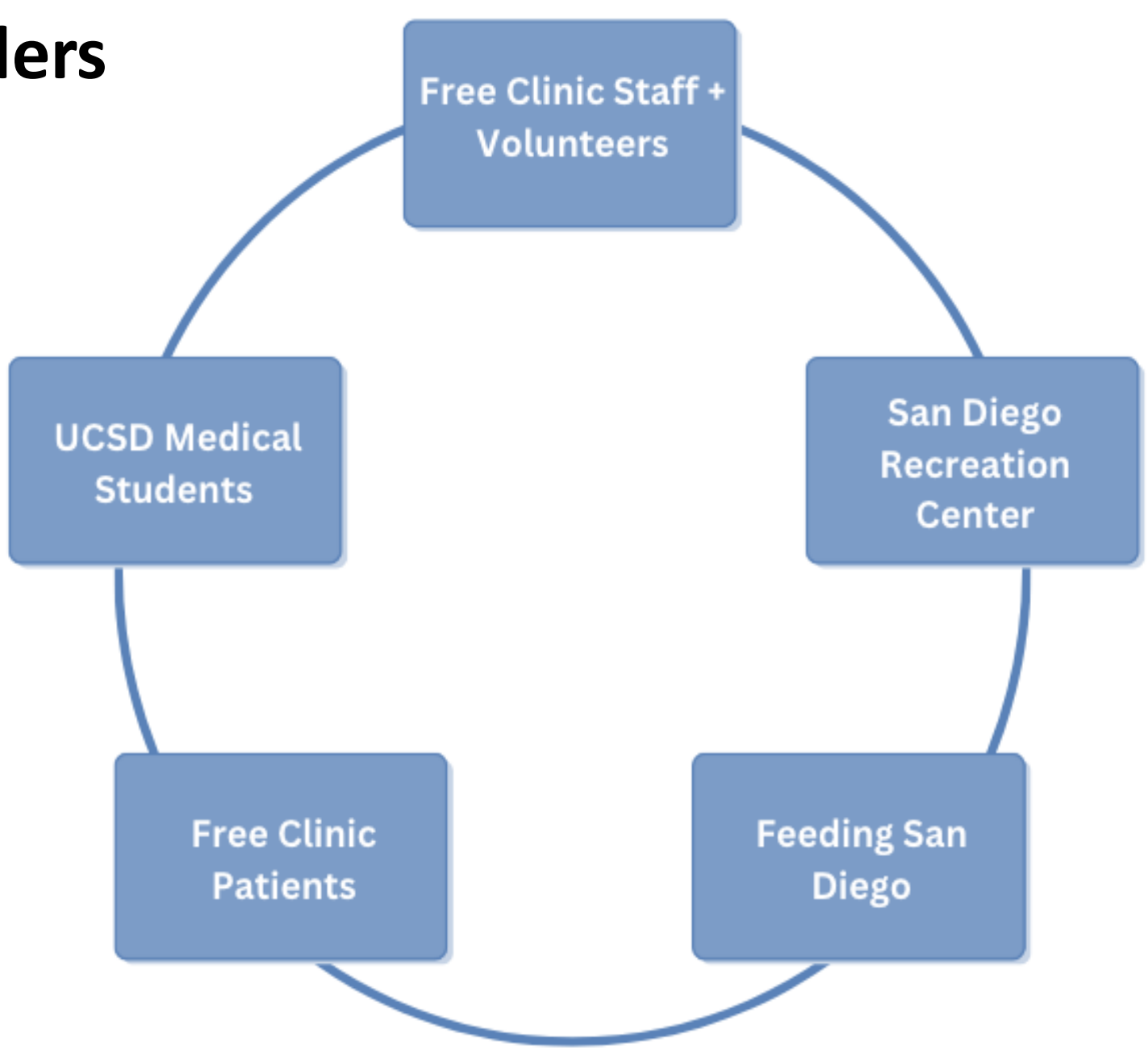


Table 1. Health topics and associated recipes

Health Topics	Resources and Recipe
Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)	Lemon Asparagus Pasta Watermelon Salad
Reading Nutrition Labels	Heart of Palm Ceviche Creamy Orange Cantaloupe Smoothie
Anti-inflammatory Diets	Lentil Soup Strawberry Bulgar Yogurt Parfait Bulgur Fried Rice
Incorporation of Hydrating Foods in the Summer	Roasted Veggies (Green Beans, Yellow Potatoe, Cauliflower, Chickpeas, and Tomatoes) Orange, Mango, and Pineapple Smoothie

Figure 2. Photos of NKP managers in a nutrition class setting



CONCLUSION

1. NKP serves as a sustainable model for community-based nutrition education, demonstrating that practical, patient-centered approaches can enhance dietary awareness, thereby improving health outcomes.
2. The program’s resilience and its positive impact on patient confidence regarding health management, evidenced by its longevity and patient satisfaction, make it an effective strategy for addressing health disparities.
1. The program continues to face difficulties with low attendance, and thus, outreach efforts remain among the top priorities for improving the program.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. Create formalized implementation survey to track program impact and feedback and long –term health impacts
 - Implement pre and post surveys
2. Additional outreach methods with Free Clinic to increase referrals targeted to patients in the nutrition security program and those that live near location of our program
3. Create accessible content on website or social media with recipe and demonstrations.
4. Coordinate meetings with registered dietician at Free Clinic

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