

Wellness and Public Health

Adopting sustainable menu practices: Outer context influences

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Introduction: In Canada, there is growing interest for food sustainability, with many initiatives aiming to improve human and planetary health. Sustainability initiatives are also seen in healthcare institutions, where foodservices can adopt sustainable menu practices (SMPs). As little is known about the feasibility of adopting SMPs in Quebec healthcare institutions, understanding these institutions outer context is important.

Objectives: As part of a larger study evaluating the feasibility of SMPs in healthcare institutions, this presentation aims to identify the external influences that stimulate or discourage a foodservice managers decision to adopt SMPs.

Methods: This qualitative phenomenological research is carried out in partnership with Nourish, a national initiative on food in healthcare. Using purposeful sampling, 17 foodservice managers across 10 regions of Quebec were recruited to participate in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. The diffusion of innovations framework was used to structure the questionnaire for data collection and the codebook for analysis. This framework explains the determinants in which an innovation (SMPs) spreads through a social system (healthcare organizations); thus can illustrate possible influences on the decision to adopt SMPs in healthcare foodservices.

Results: Foodservice managers are faced with many external influences in SMP adoption. Political directives, such as the presence of provincial laws mandating food procurement contract awarding and the absence of ministerial laws requiring adherence to sustainability guidelines can negatively impact adoption. Public opinion on sustainability and food habit evolution across generations can also affect the foodservice managers decision-making process. Other influences include food industries and the existence of municipal services.

Conclusions: While foodservice managers ultimately take the decision to adopt SMPs, this choice can be partially determined by the organization's outer context.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: Food sustainability is part of the evolving field of dietetics. As foodservice managers are often dietitians, their ability to identify external sources of influence is crucial for SMP adoption.

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