

## **A social media campaign in Saskatchewan to enhance food security during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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**Introduction:** The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many food security challenges. Eat Well Saskatchewan (EWS), a free dietitian contact service in Saskatchewan, implemented a 16-week social media campaign (#eatwellcovid19) using a storytelling approach. This campaign allowed Saskatchewan residents to share their experiences on how they coped with food insecurity challenges during COVID-19 with others.

**Objectives:** To describe implementation and evaluation of #eatwellcovid19 using social media analytics and qualitative interviews of campaign followers.

**Methods:** EWS encouraged Saskatchewan residents to submit personal stories that demonstrated their own coping strategies in dealing with food security challenges during COVID-19. Each week, 1-3 stories were featured on EWS social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), along with social media posts featuring related evidence-based nutrition information. Social media metrics and semi-structured qualitative interviews of campaign followers were used to evaluate campaign impact. The interviews were analyzed using content analysis and NVivo.

**Results:** EWS received 75 stories from Saskatchewan residents and 42 were featured on social media. Stories were on various topics (e.g., traditional food skills, gardening). On Facebook, the campaign reached 100,571 people, left 128,818 impressions and 9,575 engaged with posts. On Instagram, the campaign reached 11,310 people, and made 14,145 impressions. On Twitter, the campaign made 15,199 impressions and received 424 engagements. All EWS social media platforms saw an increase in followers during the campaign; Instagram's growth was the largest (+30%). Not including campaign posters promoted with paid advertising, featured story submission posts made the largest impact on all platforms (except Twitter), followed by supplemental content related to featured stories. Interview participants (n=20) appreciated the positive, local and reliable content and stated the storytelling format helped them to feel connected to their community during social isolation.

**Conclusions:** Storytelling appeared to be a successful approach for this campaign. Residents appreciated hearing local stories to help deal with food security concerns experienced during the pandemic.

**Significance:** Social media health promotion campaigns are gaining popularity and have potential to reach large audiences and counteract nutrition misinformation. Storytelling is an approach dietitians could use when designing similar campaigns.

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