

Topic Area: Food Security

Abstract Title:

Shifting thinking about income-related food insecurity: Health students and practitioners reflections on 'The Hand You Are Dealt'

Williams P¹, Hart C², Bessey M³, Waddington M⁴, Johnson C⁵

¹⁻³ Mount Saint Vincent University, Nova Scotia, ⁴⁻⁵ Nova Scotia Health Authority, Nova Scotia [E]

Purpose: Since 2002, Participatory Food Costing, and related research on the lived experiences of food insecurity in Nova Scotia has demonstrated the need to shift policy change efforts from increasing minimum wage and Income Assistance towards more comprehensive policy approaches that ensure a sustainable liveable income to meet basic needs, including a nutritious diet, for all. Divergent worldviews on the causes of, and solutions to, food insecurity, however, pose significant barriers to policy changes needed to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Content: The Hand You are Dealt board game (HYD) was developed by FoodARC partners in 2015 to build awareness of structural barriers to food security, and support shifts in thinking about the approaches needed to address it, and implications for population health. This presentation will provide an overview of the HYD and share experiences with facilitating and playing the game.

Systematic Approach: A series of interactive sessions (n=8) were held with health student, practitioner, and mixed audiences between November 2015 and October 2016. Audiences played the HYD and participated in facilitated discussions on using the tool to support knowledge sharing on income-related food insecurity. Data were analyzed using content analysis, and partners were engaged in a focus group to reflect on their experiences facilitating the game.

Conclusions & Recommendations: The HYD was effective in capturing health students' and practitioners' attention, creating empathy, and transforming perceptions and assumptions about people facing food insecurity. Participants felt it could be an important "sensitivity training" tool for health students, as well as community-based health practitioners. Challenges around the effectiveness and accessibility of the game were identified by participants but a variety of approaches including "train the trainer" were suggested to address the challenges. The HYD offers potential to shift thinking towards longer-term policy solutions for food insecurity, but the accessibility of the tool will need to be addressed.