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Implementing an online intervention to enhance healthcare providers' proficiency in general  
nutrition and nutrition counseling of the substance abuse population

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*“On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on  
this assignment” – KEB 4/22/2020*

### **Abstract**

**Background:** Few healthcare providers are adequately prepared to provide nutrition counseling to their patients, especially those with debilitating diseases such as substance use disorder (SUD). Patients with SUD often have underlying malnutrition that not only puts them at risk for relapse, but also of developing long-term complications. Current literature has shown that nutrition-based counseling has a positive impact on the recovery and quality of life of these individuals. However, many providers lack disease-focused nutritional skills due to a deficit of focused training in healthcare universities and continuing education. **Methods:** The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effect an online nutrition education module had on proficiency in general nutrition and the nutritional needs of the SUD population for current and future healthcare professionals. The project utilized a pre-posttest study design comparing nutrition knowledge and confidence at baseline and immediately after the intervention was given. The intervention was a 20-minute online nutrition module incorporating an evidence-based nutrition curriculum. **Results:** Results of the final sample (n=10) showed a statistically significant improvement in nutrition knowledge ( $p = .000$ ) and confidence levels in relation to understanding the nutritional needs of the SUD population ( $p = .016$ ). There were no significant changes in confidence regarding nutrition knowledge or counseling. **Implications:** This pilot project demonstrated the effectiveness of an online nutrition module in improving nutrition knowledge and areas of confidence in current healthcare professionals and students. Online nutritional education is a promising delivery approach for various settings of healthcare including healthcare institutions and should be further explored.