

Continuing Education in Telenutrition for Primary Health Care Professionals in MG

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Abstract

Introduction: In Brazil, telehealth was regulated in 2010 through the Programa Telessaúde Brasil Redes, to qualify, expand resolution, and strengthen the Family Health Strategy, improving the quality of care and basic care in the SUS. **Objective:** To understand the contribution of Telenutrition to the continuing education of Primary Health Care. **Methodology:** Five Google forms answered by 134 participants during the lectures held between April and November 2023 were analyzed. **Results:** Regarding the theme, a greater number was recorded in "Nutritional management of obesity in PHC" (52 responses). Regarding gender, the highest percentage was female participants (86.6%). Regarding the professional category, a higher percentage of nutritionist participants was observed (47.8%). Regarding knowledge on the topic after the lecture, approximately 96% evaluated it as satisfactory or very satisfactory. **Discussion:** Therefore, encouraging distance education is essential, as it allows many professionals, who do not have the time and resources to take a face-to-face course, to improve their practice. **Conclusion:** The importance of the participation of PHC health professionals regarding the incorporation of Education processes mediated by telehealth is highlighted, considering that strengthening the bond is one of the main factors for the development of Telenutrition

Key-words: Telehealth, Telenutrition, Continuing Education, Health, Nutrition.

Resumen

Educación Continua en Telenutrición para Profesionales de la Salud de la APS en MG

Introducción: En Brasil, la telesalud fue reglamentada en 2010 a través del Programa Telessaúde Brasil Redes, con el objetivo de calificar, ampliar la resolución y fortalecer la Estrategia Salud de la Familia, mejorando la calidad de la atención y la atención básica en el SUS. **Objetivo:** Comprender la contribución de la Telenutrición a la educación permanente en la Atención Primaria de Salud. **Metodología:** Se analizaron cinco formularios de Google respondidos por 134 participantes durante las conferencias realizadas entre abril y noviembre de 2023. **Resultados:** En relación al tema, se registró un número más alto en "El manejo nutricional de la obesidad en la APS" (52 respuestas). En cuanto al género, el mayor porcentaje fue del sexo femenino (86,6%). En cuanto a la categoría profesional, se observó un mayor porcentaje de participantes nutricionistas (47,8%). El tema después de la conferencia, alrededor del 96% lo calificó como satisfactorio o muy satisfactorio. **Discusión:** Por lo tanto, fomentar la educación a distancia es fundamental, ya que permite que muchos profesionales que no tienen tiempo y recursos puedan realizar un curso presencial, logren mejorar su práctica. **Conclusión:** Se destaca la importancia de la participación de los profesionales de la salud de la APS en términos de la incorporación de procesos de Educación mediados por la Telesalud, considerando que el fortalecimiento del vínculo es un factor importante para el desarrollo de la Telenutrición.

Palabras clave: Telesalud, Telenutrición, Formación Continua, Salud, Nutrición

A Educação Permanente em Telenutrição para Profissionais da Saúde da APS em MG

Introdução: No Brasil a telessaúde foi regulamentada em 2010 por meio do Programa Telessaúde Brasil Redes, com a finalidade de qualificar, ampliar a resolutividade e fortalecer a Estratégia de Saúde da Família, melhorar a qualidade do atendimento e da atenção básica no SUS. **Objetivo:** Compreender a contribuição da Telenutrição para a educação permanente da Atenção Primária à Saúde. **Metodologia:** Foram analisados cinco formulários Google respondidos por 134 participantes durante as palestras realizadas entre abril e novembro de 2023. **Resultados:** Em relação à temática, registrou-se um maior número em "O manejo nutricional da obesidade na APS" (52 respostas). No quesito sexo, o maior percentual foi participantes do sexo feminino (86,6%). Sobre a categoria profissional observou-se um maior percentual de participantes nutricionistas (47,8%). Em relação ao conhecimento sobre o tema após a palestra, cerca de 96% avaliaram como satisfatório ou muito satisfatório. **Discussão:** Dessa forma, incentivar a educação a distância é essencial, pois permite que muitos profissionais, que não possuem tempo e recursos para fazerem um curso presencial, consigam melhorar sua prática. **Conclusão:** Ressalta-se a importância da participação dos profissionais de saúde da APS quanto à incorporação dos processos de Educação mediados por telessaúde, tendo em vista que o fortalecimento do vínculo é um dos principais fatores para o desenvolvimento da Telenutrição

Palavras-chave: Telessaúde, Telenutrição, Formação Permanente, Saúde, Nutrição.

INTRODUCTION

Continuing education of health professionals is a topic that needs to be discussed at length. Since the creation of the Secretariat for the Management of Work in Health Education (SGTES- Secretaria de Gestão do Trabalho da Educação na Saúde) by the Ministry of Health in 2003, whose objective is to seek collective reflection on work and offer instruments for its transformation, progress has been made¹.

Telehealth is an innovation that has revolutionized the way health services are offered and accessed. With the advancement of technology, telehealth has proven to be an efficient and effective solution to overcome geographical barriers and improve accessibility to health services, especially in remote or hard-to-reach areas. This innovation enables the provision of ongoing education for professionals working in primary care. It is a network that connects various health fields, such as state departments and health services, as well as educational institutions, to create strategies to improve the quality of work².

Telehealth has the potential to facilitate access to health system services, improve quality, and contribute to professional training. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the term telehealth refers to the provision of health care services in critical geographic situations. Telehealth provides health professionals with tools using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to exchange data to support the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases.

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) began developing its Global Digital Health Strategy to empower companies, health organizations, and user or citizen associations to promote health for everyone, everywhere. The proposed Global Strategy unifies, under the term Digital Health, all concepts of ICT application in Health, including e-health, Telemedicine, Telehealth, and Mobile Health. It reduces the fragmentation of technology applications in health, Digital Health broadens its understanding, in which it is characterized as an area of knowledge and practice, and absorbs the concepts of advanced use of technology, including the use of personal devices and emerging technologies³.

Digital technologies are supported and integrated into healthcare systems, overcoming geographical barriers. It is understood that telehealth guarantees access to quality healthcare for all Brazilians, especially those living in

remote areas of the country. Remote care makes it possible to expand diagnoses and early detection of diseases, bringing healthcare professionals and patients closer together.

We need to consider that basic health care in Brazil faces several challenges, as some municipalities do not have medical specialties and the population needs to travel to the nearest cities. The elderly and children often require specialized transportation, making it difficult to travel to medical care. Thus, telehealth has become a very important channel, as unnecessary referrals have been reduced, generating savings for the SUS, in addition to minimizing the risks of travel, such as problems on the roads, and lack of adequate ambulances, among others⁴.

Telehealth offers remote health care and services, improving patient outcomes and increasing access to care and valid information for diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases and injuries. It is a powerful tool for continuing education for health professionals for actions to promote health and prevent diseases among individuals and their communities, reaching particular communities located in remote or rural areas with few health services and personnel⁵.

Telehealth in Brazil has become a strategic reference in Continuing Education in Health, implementing a multidisciplinary approach to problematize health practices. Continuing Education in Health is a learning and improvement strategy aimed at health workers to promote training and expand the problem-solving capacity for transforming the world of health⁶.

Telehealth enables better patient care and contributes to the ongoing training of healthcare professionals, thereby encouraging rapid organization and synthesis of knowledge, facilitating knowledge exchange, and accelerating the implementation of innovations in the healthcare network. Given the workload and the difficulty of getting around and being released for in-person training, telehealth can be considered an institutional strengthening strategy for healthcare teams by qualifying work processes and intensifying the integration of continuing education policies based on the needs and contexts of healthcare professionals.

The incorporation of technology does not consist only of using the resource as a “means of doing things differently from what is already done”, but an opportunity to “rethink what is done”. It requires the health sector to constantly invest in updating and evaluating the feasibility of adapting technologies to the reality of work life, developing a critical and reflective view of their professional performance in the search for quality in their work⁷.

Considering the need to guarantee the constitutional right to food and nutritional security, the Telenutrition project, which has been developed since 2022, is responsible for food and nutrition content, reflecting that nutrition has a preventive nature, highlighting the relationship between human beings and food, showing the fundamental importance in preventing, maintaining and balancing health. The online telenutrition lectures of the MG/UFMG telehealth center enable the discussion of knowledge in Nutrition, forming a food and nutritional security network, essential for healthy eating in the state of Minas Gerais, for the municipalities registered by the Programa Telessaúde Brasil redes. The use of information and communication technologies breaks down barriers that over a long time have become one of the greatest difficulties: distance and cost.

Therefore, telehealth needs to be encouraged, considering the characteristics of each service, as it contributes to improving the health of the population, especially those who depend on the free health system. To observe more evidence of the benefits of telehealth, this study sought to evaluate the contribution of Telenutrition Web conferences promoted by the YouTube channel of the Minas Gerais Telehealth Center - UFMG for the training of health professionals.

METHOD

This is a quantitative descriptive study on the Telenutrition Web conferences held by the YouTube channel of the Minas Gerais Telehealth Center - UFMG. Most viewers are from the health field, including students and professionals. The data were obtained through the analysis of the responses to five electronic forms available during the web conferences, which took place from April to November 2023. The dissemination of the virtual lectures among health professionals in the municipalities of Minas Gerais is done through periodic emails.

During the web conferences, a link to a Google form with questions about participants' gender and profession was provided. Participants were also asked about their knowledge of the topics before and after the web conference. During the web conference, participants were informed about the link to access the form and asked to fill it out. A total of 134 participants responded to the online questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used to organize and reduce the data to help describe the results obtained.

RESULTS

The first form analyzed was the web conference on “Nutrition and Vegetarianism” held on April 12, 2023, and received 14 responses. The second form on the topic “Vegetarian diet: interpretation of biochemical tests” held on May 24, 2023, received 27 responses. The third topic, “The role of the nutritionist in long-term care facilities for the elderly (ILPIs)”, with a web conference held on June 21, 2023, received 10 responses. The fourth web conference analyzed was on the topic: “Nutritional management of obesity in PHC” held on September 27, 2023, with 52 completed forms. Finally, the last form analyzed was on the topic “Programs and Strategies to combat malnutrition in Minas Gerais”, held on November 8, 2023, with 31 responses (Table 1).

Table 1 – number of completed forms, topics covered, and dates of Telenutrition web conferences.

Number of forms answered by topic		
Date	Topic	Quantity
04/12/2023	Nutrition and Vegetarianism	14
05/24/2023	Vegetarian diet: interpretation of biochemical tests	27
06/21/2023	The role of the Nutritionist in ILPI's	10
09/27/2023	Nutritional management of obesity in PHC	52
11/8/2023	Programs and Strategies to Combat Malnutrition in Minas Gerais	31

Source: Own authorship (2024) - Translated.

Regarding the gender of the participants, considering all the forms mentioned, there were 116 (86.6%) female participants and only 18 (13.4%) male participants, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – gender of the participants.

Gender of the participants		
Gender	Quantity of participants	%
Female	116	86.6
Male	18	13.4

Source: Own authorship (2024) - Translated.

Regarding the professional category, we observed that 55 (47.8%) of the participants were nutritionists, 20 nurses (17.4%), 5 physical education professionals (4.3%) and 35 had another profession (30.4%). This category had a smaller number of responses, only 115, as it was not a mandatory question.

Table 3 - profession of the participants.

Profession of the participants		
Profession	Quantity of participants	%
Nutritionist	55	47.8
Nurse	20	17.4
Physical education professionals	05	4.3
Other	35	30.4
Total	115	100%

Source: Own authorship (2024) - Translated.

Finally, regarding the assessment of knowledge on the topic of web conferencing, there was a percentage increase in the “Satisfactory” and “Very Satisfactory” classes and a significant decrease in the “Average” category and 0% in the “Unsatisfactory” category. The “Very Unsatisfactory” category remained stable, but with a low percentage representation (Table 4).

Table 4 – assessment of knowledge on the topic of the web conference.

Knowledge assessment before and after the web conference		
	% BEFORE the web	% AFTER the web
Very unsatisfactory	2.2	2.2
Unsatisfactory	3	0
Average	32.1	1.5
Satisfactory	50.7	53
Very satisfactory	12	43.3

Source: Own authorship (2024) - Translated.

DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the results, we observed that most participants in the Telenutrition web conference were female (Table 2). More than 85% of the audience were health professionals and almost half were nutritionists (Table 3). Other professions also stood out, such as nurses and physical educators, demonstrating the importance of this form of education in nutrition and the creation of specific groups for food and nutritional education⁸.

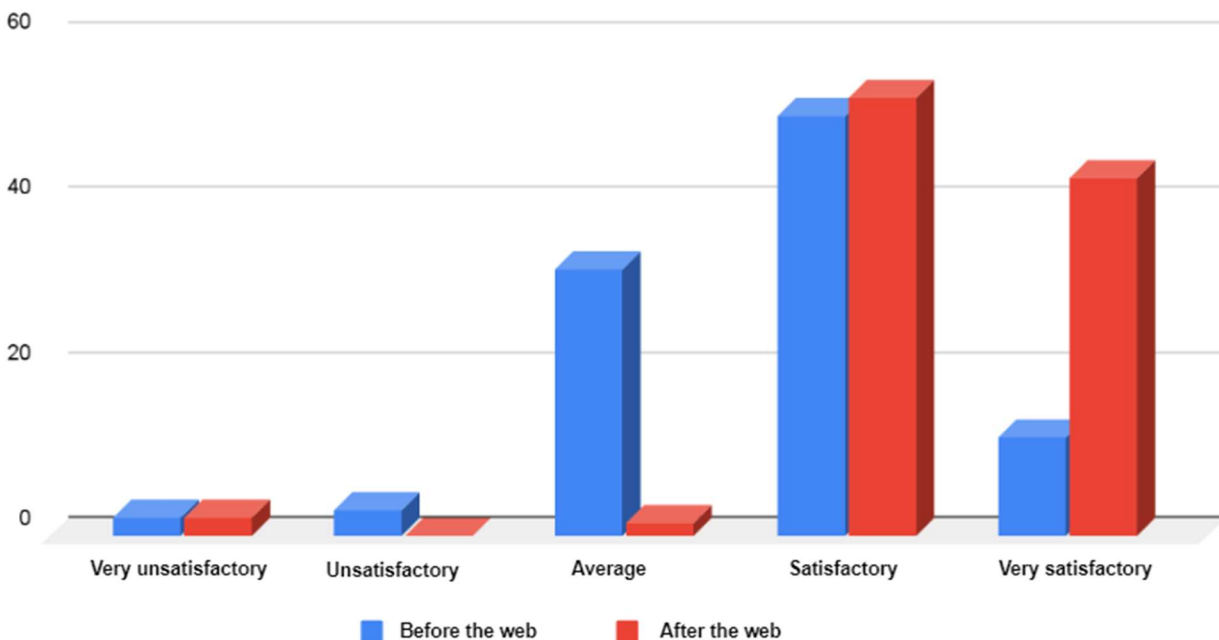
The use of accessible resources such as cell phones and/or computers provides professional preparation, as they are new and significant materials for overcoming cultural, socioeconomic, and geographical barriers for health workers and students, avoiding travel, which is often unfeasible⁹.

Participants were asked to evaluate their knowledge of the subject before and after the lecture. Before the lecture, the majority, 50.8%, rated their knowledge of the subject as satisfactory and 12% considered it very satisfactory. After the lecture, almost 97% of the audience rated their knowledge as adequate (satisfactory or very satisfactory), that is, the lecture helped participants acquire more knowledge on the subject discussed (Table 4 and Graph 1).

The ongoing education of nutritionists through web conferences in the Telenutrition Project at the MG/UFMG Telehealth Center is important so that these professionals can acquire knowledge and share their concerns with colleagues.

Health professionals who use telehealth report changes in their practices, as it minimizes doubts when caring for patients and promotes greater safety when performing procedures¹⁰.

Graph 1 - Comparison between knowledge before and after the web conference



Source: Own authorship (2024) - Translated.

The environment used for the training allows for a lot of interaction and ease of access, as it is free and the vast majority of participants are used to using it. Participants can communicate via chat, leaving their questions. The speakers answer the questions and at the end they even allow the audience to choose new topics that interest them through an electronic form.

The interaction between health professionals and speakers during the web conferences was significant because this moment allows the presentation of specific questions of clinical practice, providing the opportunity to present adequate scientific evidence that contributes to clinical decision-making, to transform and qualify health care, in addition to encouraging teamwork and listening to the population¹⁰.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth has proven to be a very important channel for both patients and healthcare professionals. Different state telehealth centers were created or reformulated to meet the demand for information about SARS-CoV-2. The SUS promoted educational initiatives related to the pandemic, produced care protocols and various media such as videos, infographics, podcasts, and web conferences to provide continuing education and communicate information to the population¹¹.

CONCLUSION

Continuing education offered by the Telenutrition project, by employing the tele-education tool presented by the Telehealth Program, assists in the continuing education of health professionals, in addition to providing greater proximity between academia and health services, enabling the exchange of knowledge, in a proposal that integrates professional training and practice. Tele-education is an important tool for ensuring continuing education that is increasingly used as a means of learning and professional training, including as a means of inclusion for those who face restrictions, such as those presented in this work.

The importance of the participation of PHC health professionals in the incorporation of education processes mediated by distance technologies is emphasized, considering that strengthening the bond is one of the main factors for the development of Telenutrition. The importance of strengthening the use of Telehealth tools with the use of tele-education points out that the topics covered in the web conferences allow for reflection on theory and practice, expanding scientific knowledge on the subject and contributing to changes.

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