

Investigating Dissemination Methodology Preferences for Evidence-Based Guidelines Related to a Gluten-Free Diet Specifically for RDNs.

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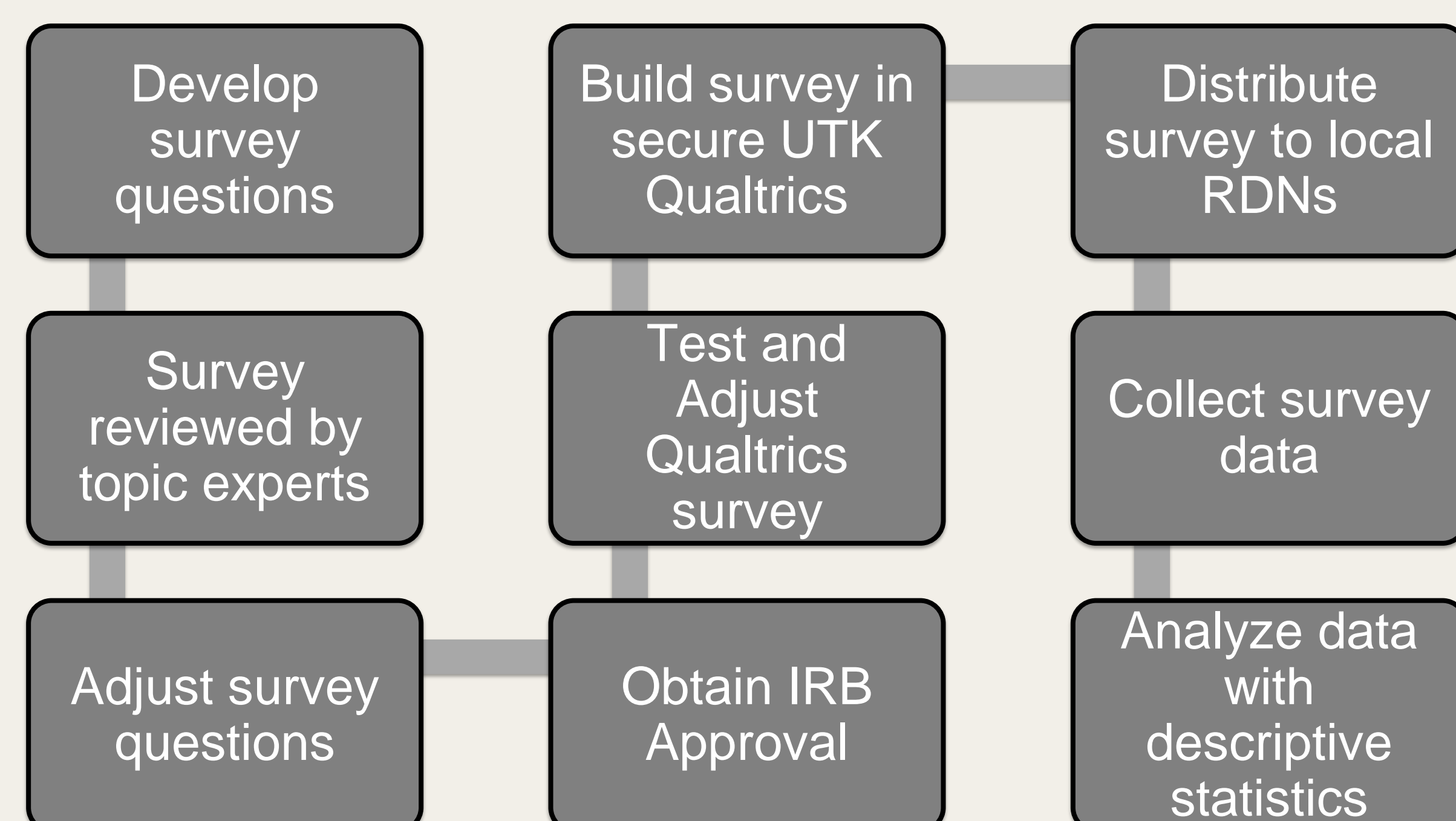
Introduction

- Gluten free diets (GFDs) are essential for managing conditions such as celiac disease, wheat/gluten sensitivities, and dermatitis herpetiformis, an autoimmune skin condition.¹
- The incorporation of GFDs among Americans without celiac disease has risen substantially in recent years.¹
- Americans tend to be exposed to misinformation which undermines evidence-based guidelines supported by current research typically applied by registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) in the healthcare practice setting.^{1,2,3}
- Staying current is foundational to effective dietetics practice, however, little research has investigated what sources RDNs use to find information on GFD recommendations, degree of adherence to evidence-based guidelines, and preferences for accessing updated information.
- This study sought to address these gaps through an anonymous pilot survey of practicing RDNs in Knox County, Tennessee.
- The aim of this study was to take a step towards enhancing the quality of diet-related education and counseling and to optimize health outcomes for individuals following or considering a GFD.

Research Questions

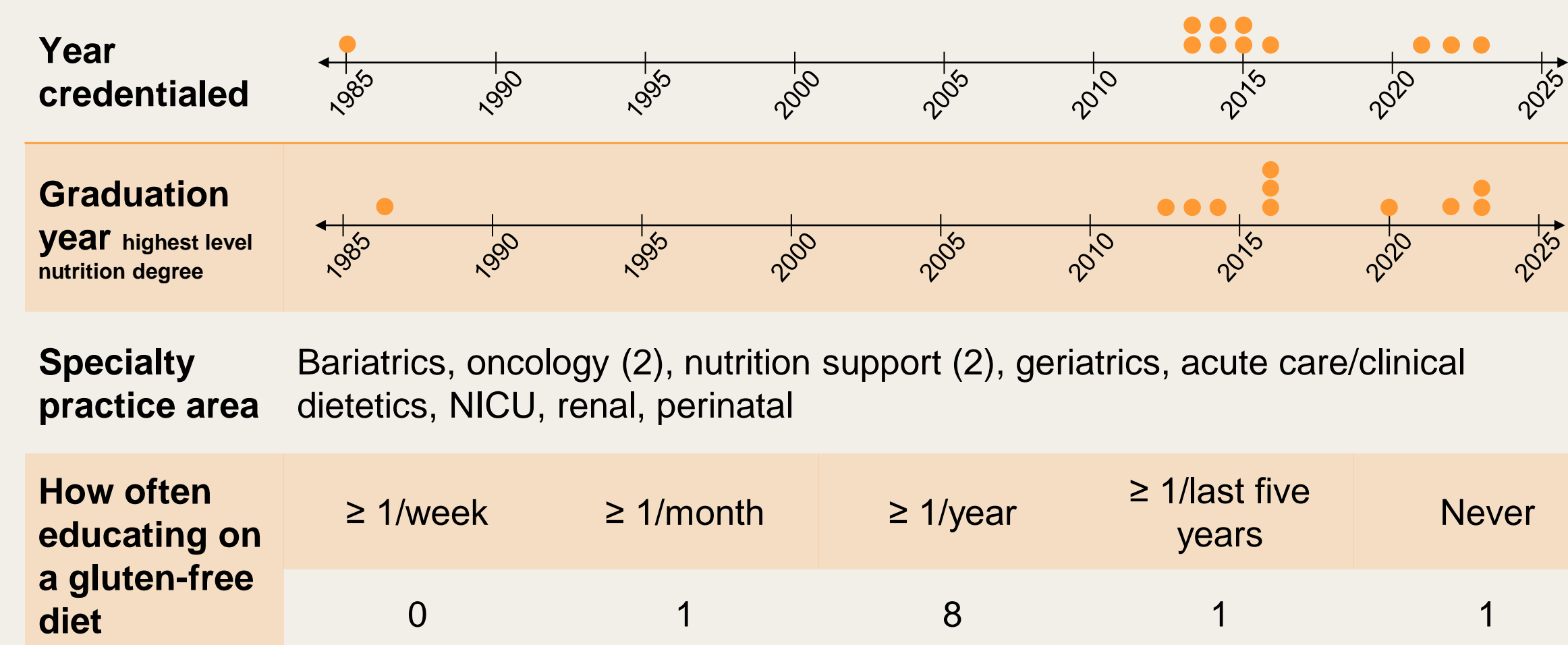
1. Does the source of gluten-free diet recommendations differ by graduation year of highest nutrition degree earned among currently practicing registered dietitians licensed in Knox County, Tennessee?
2. Are practicing RDNs interested in additional information and resources on gluten-free diets, and if so, what is the preferred method of evidence-based research dissemination among currently practicing registered dietitians licensed in Knox County, Tennessee?

Methods



Results

Survey population



- No clear association was noted between graduation year and what sources were used.
- 82% of respondents chose websites, 64% chose webinars, and 64% chose academic journals (respondents were able to make multiple choices) as methods used to seek recommendations on GFDs, with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' Nutrition Care Manual as the most commonly cited website.
- Other methods used by at least one respondent, but by less than 50% of respondents include a textbook, a conference, and social media. Magazines and podcasts were not chosen by any respondents.
- The majority of respondents (36%) had last sought out information on GFDs between 1 and 5 years ago, 27% within the last 1 to 11 months, one respondent within the last month, and one greater than 10 years ago. One respondent chose not to answer this question.
- 91% of respondents selected Celiac Disease and non-Celiac wheat gluten sensitivity as valid reasons to recommend a GFD. 82% selected wheat allergy, 55% gluten ataxia, and 27% dermatitis herpetiformis. Eosinophilic esophagitis, autism spectrum disorder, rheumatoid arthritis, and functional gastrointestinal disorders were each also selected by 2 or fewer respondents as a reason to recommend a GFD.

Ranking of information distribution type preferences

*Note: a few of the following tied for preference rank

1. Webinars
2. Online journal
2. Informed by supervisor/institution
3. Email newsletter
4. Conferences
5. Email distribution lists
5. Printed newsletter
6. Social media
6. Word of mouth
7. Printed journal
8. Journal club
9. Surveys & quizzes
9. Podcasts
10. Other

Discussion

This pilot study involved 13 respondents, with 11 meeting the inclusion criteria, a nice response rate for a pilot. Respondents represented a diverse mix of experience and graduation years in the field of nutrition. Their specialty practice areas varied, showcasing expertise in clinical and specialized nutrition fields. Responses regarding education on gluten-free diets ranged from regular to infrequent, indicating varied engagement levels among RDNs. Digital and scholarly sources like websites, webinars, academic journals, and textbooks were predominantly used, reflecting a preference for credible and accessible resources. However, there were discrepancies in the recency of seeking information, with some respondents not having done so in over a decade. Leading diagnoses for prescribing a gluten-free diet aligned with established medical guidelines, focusing mainly on conditions like celiac disease and wheat allergies. Preferences for updates leaned towards interactive formats such as webinars and online journals, showing a commitment to continuous learning. Barriers to accessing preferred information sources, primarily financial constraints and lack of employer support, highlighted systemic challenges within the profession. Overall, the survey provided valuable insights into dissemination preferences, practices, and challenges faced by RDNs regarding gluten-free diets and provides a starting point for a broader application of these research questions to a larger population.

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the dissemination methodology preferences for evidence-based guidelines related to a gluten-free diet among RDNs in Knox County, Tennessee. The study addressed two primary research questions regarding the sources of gluten-free diet recommendations and RDN's interest in additional information and resources. Findings indicated that there was no significant association between graduation year and the sources of gluten free diet recommendations, with webinars and websites being the most commonly utilized sources among participants with the NCM being the most frequently cited website. These results provide valuable insights into the preferred methods of evidence-based research dissemination among practicing RDNs and underscore the importance of accessible and credible resources in supporting professional practice and continuing education within the field of nutrition.

Future Research

As a pilot study, this research paves the way for other researchers to undertake a similar study with a wider population, such as RDNs across the state of Tennessee. The dissemination strategy used for this study appeared reasonably effective, but further avenues could be explored, such as posting the survey link in dietetic practice group discussion boards or on social media. One suggestion was made to update the wording in one of the survey questions to make it a little clearer. In addition, if a similar study were to be conducted on a larger scale, a statistician should be consulted before dissemination of the survey to assure it has been set up to facilitate rigorous statistical analysis. Finally, while this study focused on GFD recommendation, similar studies could be done to evaluate preferred evidence-based practice recommendation dissemination methods in the context of many practice areas or in the dietetics profession in general.