Dining with Diabetes Success in District III

The Situation
Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in Idaho and the United States. Approximately 4 percent, about 35,000, of adult Idahoans have been diagnosed with diabetes and approximately 17,500 are not yet diagnosed. Therefore, an estimated 52,500 Idahoans have diabetes.

People with diabetes are more likely to suffer from heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney disease and dental disease than people without diabetes. Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that adults with diabetes are more likely to be overweight, have high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and be sedentary than those without diabetes. Studies also show that people with diabetes are less likely to eat fruits and vegetables. The total annual cost of diabetes in Idaho, including direct medical expenses and indirect costs, such as disability, work loss and premature mortality is estimated at $338 million.

Our Response
Inputs: The “Dining with Diabetes” curriculum is presented to individuals with diabetes and their families in order to help families manage diabetes through healthy eating. The program helps reduce the burden of diabetes by offering a program that can provide tools for the self-management of this chronic disease.

Outputs: Dining with Diabetes offers a social environment conducive to the transfer of knowledge and skills by interactive cooking demonstrations and the tasting of foods. The three-lesson curriculum includes sessions on desserts, main dishes and side dishes. The curriculum teaches how to use the Idaho Plate Method, which is a visual way for clients to learn the types and amounts of foods they should be eating. The goals of each class include increasing knowledge of healthy food choices, presenting healthy versions of familiar foods, encouraging behavior change by providing tastes of healthy foods, and providing opportunities for participants to share and learn from each other. The recipe demonstration portion of each session is an integral part of the success of Dining with Diabetes. It is important to show participants that healthful foods can be prepared easily and quickly.

Program Outcomes
Approximately 113 individuals have completed the three sessions. Most of the participants either had diabetes or had a family member who was diabetic. Many husband and wife teams attend the sessions. Pre- and post-test scores showed an increase in knowledge, from a score of 45 percent correct on the pre test to 95 percent correct on the posttest. Individuals were able to plan meals using the Idaho Plate Method. Based on the eating habits survey, 72 to 80 percent of the participants planned meals that met the dairy, fruits and vegetable recommendations. 96 to 100 percent met the grain and meat recommendations. They also planned to reduce the amount of fat in their diet.

The Supermarket Hunt is an activity that class members complete on their own time. The results
are then shared in the third class. Participants reported an increase in label reading and an increase of knowledge of foods in the supermarket. “The Supermarket Hunt was a real eye opener,” stated one participant. “I didn’t realize the difference in sugar content of fruit canned in juice, compared to fruit in light syrup and heavy syrup.” The participants also felt the information on fats was very helpful.

The “Dining with Diabetes” class was highly rated by participants with 95 percent rating it as doing an excellent job of providing information that met their needs.

The Class Reunion, conducted six months after the conclusion of the cooking school, is essential to assess the quality and the outcome of this diabetes education program. The reunion is also an opportunity for participants to share with educators and with each other their success stories, suggestions for improvement and ongoing needs. Participant’s comments include: “Now I know how to use sugar substitutes in cooking.” “My husband has lowered his cholesterol as a result of the foods I am now preparing.” “The increased knowledge of carbohydrate content of foods has been a real eye opener.” “I watch fats, salts and calories more than before.” “I am definitely more aware of what I am cooking.” At the second-class reunion, participants were asked, “As a result of this class, which of the following things will you do to take charge of your diabetes?” All of the participants who had diabetes said they were having their blood tested on a regular basis, getting an eye exam, seeing a doctor, and trying to follow the Idaho Plate Method of eating.

There is a large demand for these classes. Participants have requested more classes to keep them up to date on the latest information on nutrition, diet and diabetes. Several of the participants have recommended the classes to others. As a result, another class will be held in Twin Falls this spring.

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