Abstract

Dietary Acculturation of Nepalese Women in Aotearoa, New Zealand [†]

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The immigrant population in New Zealand is growing dramatically, giving those arriving on work visas, student visas and visitor visas no guaranteed right to remain as well as restrictions to social resources such as health care. The changing nature and impact of immigration makes the health status of ethnic minorities an increasingly important public health issue as it is usually accompanied by economic, cultural, environmental and lifestyle changes that can markedly increase non-communicable disease risk. In particular, adoption of “Western” dietary patterns that tend to be low in fruits and vegetables and high in fat is of concern. Dietary acculturation is a process by which migrants adopt the eating patterns/food choices of the host country and it varies considerably, depending on a variety of individual, cultural and environmental factors. It is not a simple process in which a person moves from one end of the acculturation continuum (traditional) to the other end (acculturated). Dietary acculturation is a reciprocal process where the host group can adopt dietary practices from the minority group. Therefore, it is vital to understand the dynamic, multidimensional process and identify attributions that predispose and enable the negative aspects of dietary acculturation to occur. In this report, we give an overview of dietary acculturation, nutrition transition and provide 6 narratives using photo-elicitation to illustrate dietary acculturation for Nepalese women in the context of New Zealand. Finally, we provide information on how acculturation can be used to design interventions for minority, migrant groups and applications for researchers and practitioners. Through dietary counselling, practitioners that work with migrants can determine the degree to which adoption of healthful aspects of Western dietary culture and maintaining traditional eating can be beneficial.

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