

Assessing General Pediatrician's Knowledge and Attitudes of the Ketogenic Diet for Seizure Control

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Of the 2.5 million Americans living with intractable epilepsy, 25-30% have inadequate seizure control despite accepted pharmacologic regimens. Our objectives were to determine general pediatricians' knowledge and attitude of the ketogenic diet (KD) as an alternative or supplemental therapy for children with intractable epilepsy, and to increase awareness to state-wide pediatricians about a KD program under development at MUSC. The survey contained 11 questions consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions, as well as background information and references for further reading. Seventy-two surveys were sent to pediatric clinics state-wide. Results indicated a total of nineteen surveys were returned and analyzed. Responses to general nutrition questions indicated that 100% considered nutrition as important, and 74% have access to an RD. For questions pertaining specifically to the KD, 100% were familiar with this treatment, but roughly 50% admitted their knowledge of it was below average and wanted to learn more. While approximately 80% were able to recognize the ideal candidate in terms of age, compliance, medication regimens, and family structure/support, most were unaware of the diet's potentially long-term effects after discontinuation. Barriers identified for not supporting the diet included osteoporosis, nephrolithiasis, and difficulty in controlling toddler eating habits. In conclusion, we recognize that our low response rate does not allow us to generalize pediatricians' knowledge and attitudes across South Carolina. However, based on the responses received, we discovered that more education and access to RDs has been deemed both wanted and needed by general pediatricians state-wide regarding the ketogenic diet.