Food Safety Awareness, Attitude and Practices of Food Handlers in Selected Level 3 Hospitals in Metro Manila, Philippines

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Abstract

The role of food handlers is essential in the prevention of foodborne diseases. Compliance to food safety standards among food handlers have been noted to be influenced by one's level of awareness, attitude, and practices regarding food safety. The study utilized a cross-sectional analytical design, which aimed to determine the awareness, attitude, and practice levels of 50 food handlers on food safety among four Level 3 hospitals in the Philippines, and to investigate the relationship of awareness, attitude, and practices to sociodemographic characteristics and culture using a self-administered questionnaire, the results of which were validated by direct observation of food safety practices. Results showed that food handlers had fair awareness (69.73±11.3%), positive attitude (87.8±7.6%), and good practices (84.3±7.8%) on food safety. Direct observation revealed that food handlers had poor practices on hand washing and glove usage, which were in contrast with the reported practices, indicating an over-estimation in the frequency of practices among food handlers. No significant association was found among sociodemographic characteristics, awareness, attitude, and practices. Food safety culture was found to possibly be associated to attitude and practices ($\chi 2=33.879$ and $\chi 2=11.828$ $p<0.05$, respectively). A moderate positive correlation was observed between attitude and practices ($\rho=0.4431$, $p=0.0013$). Improvement of food service quality through proper and constant teaching, training, and evaluation of food handlers were highlighted in the current study. The strict compliance to food safety standards should be of utmost importance to food handlers in order to ensure the safety and quality of food served to people.

Keywords: food safety, awareness, attitude, practice, food safety culture

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