Knowledge, attitudes and practices of functional food usage by housewives

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Food is an essential part of our lives, and consumer interest in foods that may provide benefits beyond basic nutrition, or "functional foods," is thriving (1). However, limited studies revealed that knowledge on various dimensions behind functional food is lacking among Sri Lankans. Hence, assessment of knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAPs) of functional food usage among Sri Lankan housewives is essential due to their active participation for decision making regarding food choices. A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted to assess the level of KAPs of functional food usage by housewives in selected study population in Sri Lanka. Data was collected using a pretested interviewer administered questionnaire with three hundred (n=300) willingly participated housewives in sixteen Grama Niladhari(GN) divisions in Rathnapura, Balangoda, Katharagama, and Pannala areas in Sri Lanka. Individuals were assessed by providing scores for knowledge, attitudes and practices sections of the questionnaire. Then percentage scores obtained by the individuals were assessed as "adequate level" (≥50%) or "inadequate level" (<50%).

In relation to mean scores shown in table, study subjects had inadequate knowledge but adequate attitudes and practices. Mean score of overall KAPs revealed that adequate overall KAPs among housewives in study population. Around 99% of housewives knew that certain foods can give health benefits beyond basic nutrition. Dietary fiber was most well known food component, while carotenoid was least known from given food components. Majority (98%) identified diabetes as a disease which can be managed by usage healthy food. Majority of participants believed that ability of giving health benefits can be destroyed by heating and about health benefits of spices. More than half of participants (57%) grew possible fruits and vegetables at home. All most all buyers concerned about healthiness of food when buying. Commonly used specific functional foods to maintain healthiness was curry leaves (*Murraya koenigii*), green leafy porridge, thebu leaves (*Costus speciosus*) and garlic (*Allium sativum*). The commonest barrier to selecting functional food was adding various chemicals to food. Television being the most quoted (54%) source of information about functional food. Majority (99%) interested in learning more about functional foods. Perception of fortified food usage was generally positive among housewives in study population. Significant associations were observed between age, education level, family income and occupation with knowledge and attitudes. Significant association with practices was only found with educational level. There was a positive interrelationship among KAPs.

	Mean score (%)	SD	Rank
Knowledge	46.2	23.2	Inadequate
Attitudes	76.7	16.3	Adequate
Practices	80.3	12.5	Adequate
Overall KAPs	56.6	18.6	Adequate

Inadequate knowledge score among participants demands nutrition education about functional food specially through television to be implemented for them to gain adequate knowledge, plus adequate attitudes and practices than currently.

(1) Verbeke, W. (2005). Consumer acceptance of functional foods: Socio-demographic, cognitive and attitudinal determinants. *Food Quality and Preference*. 16(1), 45–57.

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