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Abstract

Cooking Workshop for Preventing Malnutrition in the Elderly: Participants' Social Roles, Expectations and Related Effects on Food Habits [†]

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Abstract: Background and objectives: French public fundings allow NGOs to organise actions (cooking workshops including a dietician and a cooking chef) among elderly people to prevent malnutrition and loss of autonomy. Although similar interventions have already been evaluated in terms of change in knowledge and food habits, little is known about how the social roles and expectations of the participants impact the effects of the actions implemented. Methods: Following their participation in cooking workshops, 42 semi-structured interviews with various participants, including elderly people aged 60 and older, were conducted in five French regions. For 24 participants, a second interview was conducted 2–3 months later. The interviews aimed to understand their representations and practices towards health, cooking and eating, social position, life events, expectations and the effects of their participation in the cooking workshops. Results: The social roles of the participants were overall strongly linked to the effects of participation. The feeding role and domestic work of the female participants lead them to look for new recipes when participating in such workshops and to use the recipes afterwards. For some participants who cook on a daily basis, expectations were also related to reinforcing dietetic knowledge, to check whether it was up-to-date and if they were sometimes looking for moral validation of their behaviour from the dietician. These participants, who had the ability to adapt their cooking practices according to the dietetic advice provided, were all from a higher social position. Others, men and women, who had recently experienced an illness and/or hospitalisation, expected to hear some advice they had previously received. The minority of participants, mostly men, declared not knowing how to cook and saw an interest in learning this skill at some determining point in their life cycle. Finally, the decision of participating in such workshops meets the need of being part of a group, to feel less lonely and a sense of well-being that resulted from this group experience. Discussion: By highlighting three dominant approaches of the participants (cooking/dietetic knowledge/being part of a collective activity), depending on their social roles at some point in their lifecourse, these results can help in refining the design and intensifying the effects of preventive actions in the elderly.

Keywords: community-dwelling older adults; culinary-nutritional intervention; elderly; home cooking; culinary workshop; dietary diversity; dietary habit; social role; malnutrition; prevention



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