

Wichealth.org

2019 SNEB Nutrition Education Program Impact Award Recipient



The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) Nutrition Education Program Impact Award is given to an individual or group for a nutrition education program, practice or intervention that has resulted in documented changes in behavior. This year, the award will be presented to wichealth.org at the SNEB Annual Conference in Orlando, FL July 27-30.

Wichealth.org, developed by Western Michigan University public health professor Robert Bensley, is a multistate-funded behavior change system that utilizes the internet to provide parent-child feeding and adult nutrition behavior change adopted for use with clients in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics across 30 states. Since 2003, wichealth.org has grown to more than 50 nutrition education lessons sponsored by USDA, state WIC agencies, SNAP-Ed, Seafood Nutrition Partnership, United Dairy Industry of Michigan and the US Food Safety and Inspection Service.

As the leading WIC internet-based nutrition education system in the U.S., wichealth.org impacts more than 1 million WIC-client nutrition education lessons per year, with over 6 million completed lessons since its inception. Each year,

wichealth.org reaches over five percent of all U.S. children under age five. Central to the success of the program is a platform that uses a responsive design for mobile compatibility and a smart system comprised of algorithms that can diagnose readiness to change, behavioral capability and motivation, all of which drives the tailored intervention. This dynamic system provides multiple tailored intervention pathways across a single system, is bilingual and incorporates a diverse group of “virtual counselors” who guide clients through lessons.

Evaluation has repeatedly found impact in belief in ability to change behavior, progression in intent to change and changes to WIC food package consumption behaviors. Consistent evaluation findings indicate 96 percent of participants believe they can make changes based on what they learned, 81 percent beginning in an early stage of readiness to change progressed toward a more active stage, and 89 percent of return users demonstrated either maintaining or progressing in stage of change. Studies have also found engaging in wichealth.org alone resulted in fruit and vegetable consumption changes that could only be attained through both clinical nutrition education and three-month counseling follow up within the comparison group, as well as numerous engagement factors associated with online-based intent to change behavior success. ■

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Nutrition Education Program Impact Award recognizes an individual or group for a nutrition education program or practice that has resulted in documented changes in behavior. Candidates are evaluated by the level of program impact, quality of design, innovativeness and usefulness for nutrition educators.