

SCSK 583 : Culinary Medicine

The Standard American Diet (SAD) includes high consumption of ultra-processed foods, refined flours, added sugars, and sodium along with low consumption of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes. Nearly 80% of the chronic diseases faced by those in the U.S. are preventable through lifestyle changes. Poor diet has been identified as the top contributor to early death and lost healthy life years in the U.S.

On average 20 hours is spent on nutrition content in US medical schools and much of the content focuses on biochemistry and micronutrient deficiency states. Very little, if any, time is dedicated to helping students learn the components of a healthy diet, how to make a healthy diet enjoyable and practical, or how to effectively counsel patients on making healthy dietary changes.

This course does not include comprehensive nutrition information but does highlight resources and key points. Because students come from a variety of backgrounds and food traditions, the course presents a predominantly whole food, plant-based (WFPB) diet through the lenses of different world flavors and culinary traditions.

Given that any level of behavior change can potentially yield improved health and well-being, every effort should be made to meet individuals where they are, assess readiness for change, provide assistance, and partner with them to support moving along a spectrum as far and as fast (or slow) as they are willing and able to go from a SAD (or less healthy diet) toward a WFBP diet. Motivational interviewing to tailor assessment, recommendations, and interventions according to a patient's personal goals and readiness for change is suggested.

Student time commitment includes 10 sessions where the flipped classroom model may be used in which much of the didactic content and reading materials are viewed online or read ahead of class in order to allow class time to be spent doing interactive activities--in this case, hands-on cooking and interactive dinner discussions. Sessions may have 10-30 minutes of video content, plus recipes and other handouts to be watched/read/reviewed prior to each session. Other sessions involve activities such as an interactive visit to Laura Land spice garden in St. David/SGU on campus garden/Or Hage garden, visit to the market in St. George's/ Grenville, and Marketing Board and cooking/preparing a dish and eat/share it. Finally, a report stating the main message of each session, and a reflective essay of two pages completes the selective.

Core Course