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NUTRITION EDUCATION IN ASPIRE SPORTS ACADEMY: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

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School students lack the knowledge to make good nutritional decisions to improve health, performance and growth. Nutrition education is an evidence-based way to improve health outcomes, raise healthy eating habits and improve the physical and academic performance for a lifetime in school children. Research validates that behavioural change correlates positively with the amount of nutrition instruction received and should start at early stages in life. Developing and implementing a nutrition curriculum for grade 7 and 8 student athletes at Aspire sports academy by a well-designed platform based on needs assessment from students, teachers, coaches and community. The curriculum provides the knowledge and teaches skills to help students adopt and maintain lifelong healthy eating habits through appropriate participatory activities that involve social learning strategies. School nutrition education is not only to focus on nutrition information, but also to develop skills and behaviours related to areas such as social and cultural aspects of food and eating. One of the challenges facing nutrition educators with school children is to change the bad food habits and behaviors. It is well known that food habits are complex in nature and affected by many factors. Nutrition education in schools needs to be reinforced across Qatar. The ministry of health launched the first Qatar dietary guidelines in 2015, those guidelines will direct both individual behaviour change and the development of health and food policies in Qatar, they also provide consistent information for the development of new education and social marketing resources in Qatar. In order to succeed, nutrition education needs to be incorporated into the school curriculum actively. Schools provide the most effective and efficient way to reach a large segment of the population, including children, teachers, and family and other community professionals.

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