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AWARENESS ABOUT FUNCTIONAL FOODS AMONG WOMEN OF AKOLA CITY

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ABSTRACT:

A functional food is a food given an additional function (often one related to health-promotion or disease prevention) by adding new ingredients or more of existing ingredients. Functional foods are part of the continuum of products that individuals may consume to increase their health and/or contribute to reducing their disease burden. Different researchers indicated that these foods can reduce the risks of degenerative diseases. This is fact that consumption of these foods is occasional and maximum benefits of functional foods are not availed due to lack of information. Therefore, a survey was conducted to study the awareness about functional foods among 200 women of Akola city. Information was collected through a pre-tested schedule. The subjects were randomly selected and dietary survey was conducted. Study revealed that only 30 percent subjects were familiar with the term "functional food". Most of the subjects preferred bran and cereal products due to taste and nutritive value, only 16 percent subjects were aware about their gastrointestinal functions. The knowledge status related to physiological and functional properties of chocolate and cocoa, green and black tea, as well as black grapes was very low amongst all the subjects. Surprisingly the subjects had lack of awareness about the goodness of chocolate and cocoa products for health. Subjects were highly aware about the importance of nuts for cardio vascular health and the nutritional richness of milk and milk products, but none of the subjects was aware about the pre biotic functions of dairy products. Most of the subjects consumed functional foods for its taste and also to add variety to routine diet. There was little knowledge about the specific health benefits and physiological importance of functional foods. The nutritional counselling and educational programmes should be planned for the maximum utilization of functional foods in daily diet and for the promotion of nutritional awareness in the community.

Keywords:

Functional foods, specific functions, awareness

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INTRODUCTION:

'Functional food' was first introduced in Japan in the mid 1980s and refers to food containing active component that aid specific physiological functions, in addition to basic nutrition. There are wide varieties of food like citrus fruits, vegetables, tomatoes, garlic, soy products, dairy products, oat meals, tea, chocolate and cocoa etc. which are consumed for enjoyment and to add variety in diet, but there is lack of information regarding their specific junctions. Food consumption plays an important role in health and understanding the process of food choice is central to health promotion. Traditionally, food healthiness has been associated with nutrients such as protein, fat, fibre, salt and vitamin content. In addition to this, food may contain single components that claimed to have beneficial physiological effects in the body, have been called Neutraceuticals, Pharma foods, designer foods, nutritional foods, medical foods or super foods. They collectively may be termed as functional foods. The first functional food products were launched in Japan where a food category called FOSHU (Foods for Specific Health Uses) was established in 1991 to reduce the increasing health care costs. According to an EU concerted action project FUFOSE (Functional Food Science in Europe) coordinated by ILSI (International Life Sciences Institute), “a food can be regarded as functional if it has been satisfactorily demonstrated to affect beneficially one or more target functions in the body beyond adequate nutritional effects in a way that is relevant to either an improved state of health and well-being and/or reduction of risk of disease”. Conventional foods can be used for specific reduction of disease or increasing health benefits by adding to daily diet. Examples include calcium fortified orange juice or eggs with increased levels of omega-3 fatty acid. So depending on the vitamin or mineral range necessary for each day, functional foods (conventional or fortified) can be selected for maximum

value. Researchers indicated that these foods can reduce the risk of different diseases. There are wide varieties of foods like citrus fruits, vegetables, tomatoes, garlic, soy products; dairy products, oat meals, tea, chocolate and cocoa etc. which are consumed for enjoyment and to add variety in diet but there is lack of information regarding their specific functions. This is fact that intake of these foods is occasional and maximum benefits are not availed due to lack of information. Therefore, a study was conducted to know the awareness of functional foods among women of Akola city.

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

The study was conducted to know the awareness about functional foods among Women of Akola city. 200 women subjects were randomly selected from different colonies of Akola city and interviewed by pre tested schedule. Information was collected regarding their socio economic status, awareness about functional foods consumed, reasons for intake of functional foods, and their importance with the reference to health and disease prevention. The information collected was tabulated and interpretation was made by appropriate analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The results of the study are presented in table no. 1, 2 and 3. Table no. 1 revealed that the socio economic status of the subjects which includes type of family, family size, educational and financial status of women. Maximum subjects belonged to nuclear family. Level of education of 35 percent subjects was post graduate. 65 percent subjects were Homemakers while 35 percent were employed. Monthly income of 50 percent subjects was up to Rs. 30000. 60 percent subjects were of age upto 40 years and 30 percent were between 40 to 50 years of age and only 10 percent were above 50 years of age Data related to food habits

shows that 85 percent subjects were vegetarian. Table No. 2 revealed that 30 percent women were aware about the term functional foods while 70 percent subjects were unaware. The sources of information regarding functional food were News papers (20 %), Magazines (10%) and Internet (70%). Table No. 3 revealed, that basic reasons of selection of different functional foods. Most of the subjects preferred bran and cereal products due to taste and nutritional value, only 36 percent subjects were consuming due to taste and only 16 percent subjects were aware about the effects of these products on gastrointestinal tract. Subjects were highly aware about the nutritional quality of milk and milk products, but surprisingly none of the subjects was aware about prebiotics functions. Consumption of fresh salads was highly preferred by subjects for health reasons but the knowledge related to their specific functions was lacking. Green leafy vegetables, fruits, soy products and garlic were consumed in moderation by the subjects. Garlic and soya products are preferred for health by 60 percent subjects. The knowledge status related to physiological functions and functional properties of chocolate and cocoa, green and black tea, black grapes was very low amongst all the subjects. Surprisingly the subjects were lack of awareness about the goodness of chocolate and cocoa products for health. The 70 percent Subjects were highly aware about the importance of nuts for cardiovascular health.

CONCLUSION:

It can be concluded from this study that very few women were familiar with the term 'functional foods' and the sources of information were News papers, Magazines and Internet. Most of the functional foods were preferred for taste, but level of awareness related to their health benefits was very low. The concept of 'prebiotics food' was lacking amongst women. Chocolate, cocoa were avoided by the subjects due to high energy value. Women were totally ignorant about the antioxidant and

anti ageing properties of these foods. Functional foods like black tea, green tea and black grapes were consumed occasionally due to new trend of consumption, by small group of subjects. There was a little knowledge about the nutritive value, health benefits and physiological importance of functional foods. Thus, nutritional counselling and educational programmes should be planned for the maximum utilization of functional foods in daily diet and for the promotion of nutritional awareness in the community.

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Table No. 1-Socio Economic Status of the subjects

Characteristics	No. of Subjects (n=200)	
	No.	Percentage
Type of Family		
(a) Joint	32	16
(b) Nuclear	168	84
Size of Family		
(a) 1-4 members	120	60
(b) 5-8 members	60	30
(c) >8 members	20	10
Food Habits		
(a) Vegetarians	170	85
(b) Non-vegetarian	30	15
Educational Status		
(a) Primary	20	10
(b) Middle	10	05
(c) Higher Secondary	20	10
(d) Graduate	80	40
(e) Post Graduate	70	35
Monthly Income		
(a) Rs. 10,000 to 20,000/	36	18
(b)Rs. 20,000 to 30,000/	100	50
(c) Rs. 30,000 to 40,000/	40	20
(d)Rs. 40,000 to 50,000/	24	12
Age Group		
(a) Upto 40 years	120	60
(b) 40- 50 years	60	30
(c) Above 50 years	20	10
Occupation		
(a) Housewife	130	65
(b)Employed	70	35

Table No. 2 -Awareness of the subjects regarding functional foods

Status and Source of Information	**No. of Subjects**	
	No.	**Percentage**
Status (n= 200)		
Aware	60	30
Unaware	140	70
Source of Information (n=60)		
Newspaper	12	20
Magazine	06	10
Television	-	–
Internet	42	70

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Table No. 3. Reasons for Intake of Functional Foods

Food Stuffs and Benefits	*No.(n=60)*	*Percentage*
Bran and Cereal Products		
Taste	22	36.66
Effect on digestion	10	16.66
Health	28	46.66
Oat meal Products		
Taste	24	40
Effect on digestion	18	30
Health	12	20
No intake	06	10
Milk Products		
Taste	18	30
Effect of digestion	12	20
Health	30	50
Soy Products		
Taste	18	30
Health	36	60
No intake	06	10
Green leafy vegetables		
Taste	30	50
Health	30	50
Fruits		
Taste	36	60
Health	24	40
Garlic		
Taste	09	15
Health	18	30
No intake	33	55
Salads		
Taste	12	20
Health	48	80
Chocolate and cocoa		
Taste	20	33.3
Health	-	-
No intake	40	66.6
Green and black tea		
Taste	12	20
Health	12	20
No intake	24	60
Blackgrapes		
Taste	18	30
Health	12	20
No intake	30	50
Nuts		
Taste	06	10
Health	***42***	***70***
No intake	12	***20***

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