

BACKGROUND

La Colaborativa was founded as an organization in 1988, with the mission of aiding the Hispanic and Latino immigrant community, including undocumented families, non-English speakers, and low-income families. As part of their community work in Chelsea and surrounding areas, La Colaborativa distributes food to over 7,000 families, offers workforce development, housing stability, health equity, pathways to citizenship, and English language skills classes. Obesity and malnutrition are two of the top health concerns of its residents.

OBJECTIVES

Our specific objectives for this project include promoting nutrition, health management, and prevention of obesity in the population of La Colaborativa. Obesity and poor nutrition increase the risk for chronic disease, including the cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. This pilot program aimed to start culturally sensitive Spanish language nutrition classes for the clients of La Colaborativa. The classes focused on nutrition, healthy lifestyle and motivation for change.

METHODOLOGY

The work at La Colaborativa was done in sets of classes that were presented each Tuesday for a period of three weeks. During the first week, there was an evaluation of overall health and lifestyle questionnaire that was completed by every participant. Results were tabulated and graphs were made. Weight and waist circumference of participants were recorded. Topics for classes included: Health and Obesity, Nutrition Labels, and MyPlate construction. Nutrition and cooking demonstrations were also given.

RESULTS

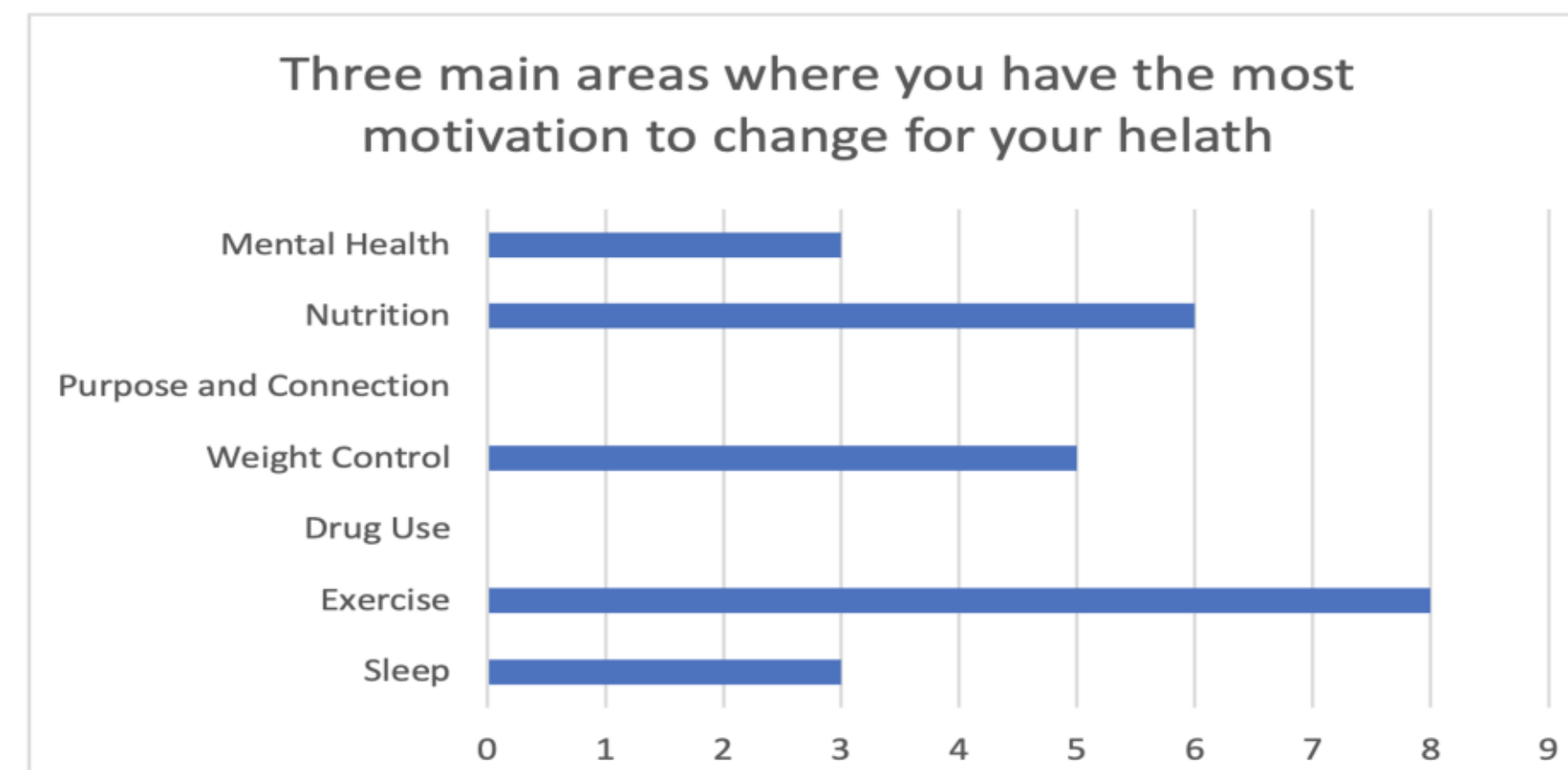


Figure 1: Participants mention three things that motivates them the most to improve their health

Suggest three changes you can make in your weekly routine with the purpose of eating healthier.

- Cook, measure my macronutrients, buy real food.
- Salads, fruits, organic.
- Eat salads, no fast-food eating, take less sugar drinks.
- Eat less fried foods, eat more vegetables, eat more fruits.
- Eat fruits and vegetables, eat small portions, more proteins.
- Fruits, vegetables, salads.
- Eat more vegetables, do more exercise, eat more fruits

Figure 2: Suggestions made by participants with the goal of improving their health

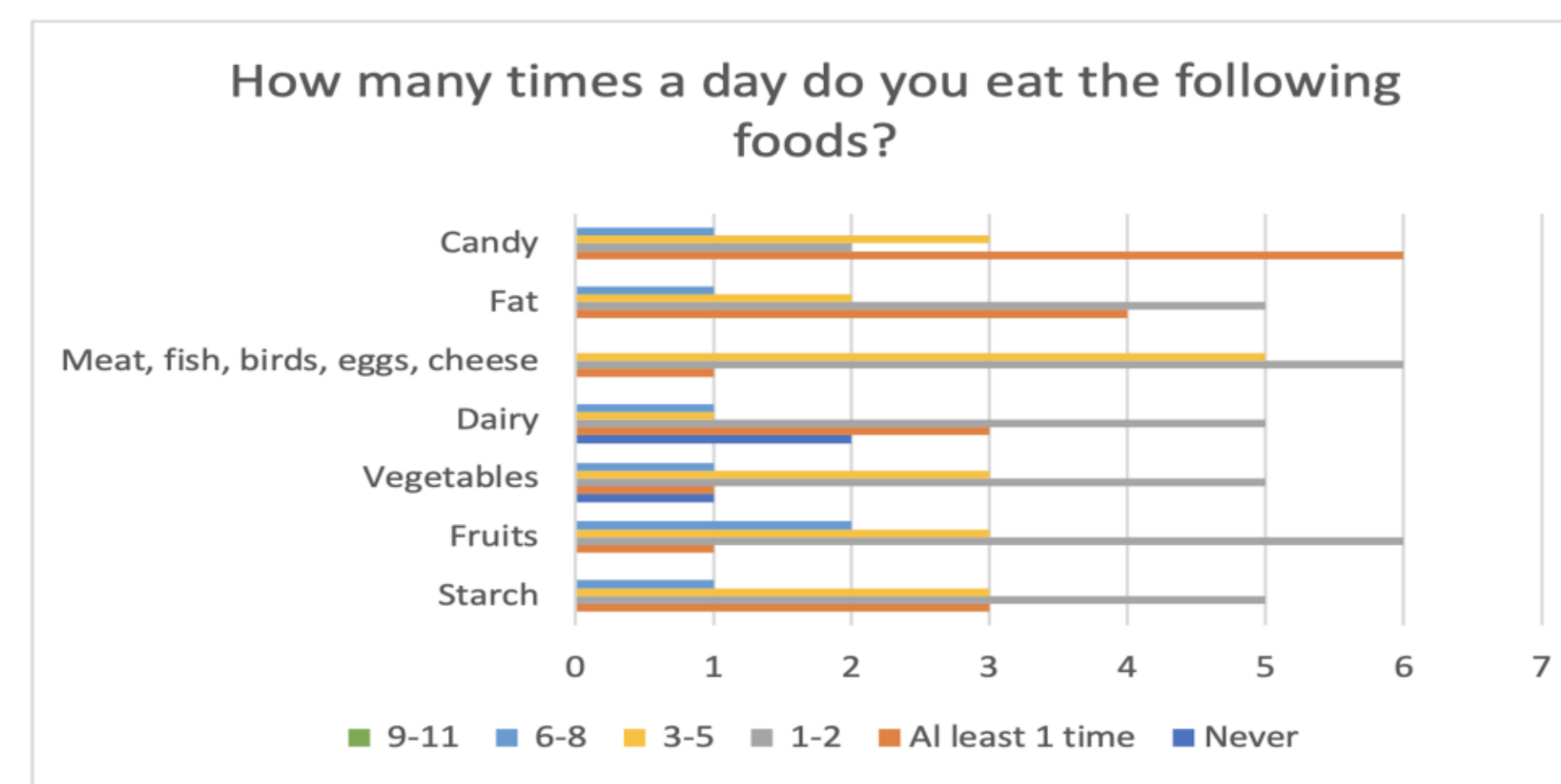


Figure 3: List and quantity of food eaten by participants.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the graphs and the tabulated data, results showed that most participants want to change their eating habits, but they lack the tools or knowledge to make those changes. After carefully examining the surveys and questionnaires and watching their behavior, it was observed that most of the participants seem to be very motivated to change their lifestyle and improve their wellbeing, as well as that of their families. The greatest motivations to change are exercising, improving their nutrition and controlling their weight. Participants were advised based on their responses that one of the most important things they needed to improve in order to see changes in both their physical and mental health is to improve their nutrition by eating more foods high in fiber and minerals and low in added sugars and saturated fats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to add blood pressure measurements to the project. Also, measure height to calculate the body mass index (BMI) in conjunction with the waist circumference and the weight that were taken in the first class. In addition, adding more group participation and activities could be very beneficial. Putting La Colaborativa in touch with a nutritionist to create a personalized work plan for people who are interested in improving their eating habits and don't know how to start could accelerate the process of making the necessary changes to improve general health and avoid chronic diseases.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NMF Primary Care Leadership Program

MGH Chelsea Healthcare Center, Chelsea MA

Colleen Ford, MD

Claudia Guillen, NP

GE Foundation