



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Taking the Plant Plunge: An Immersive Medical Student Experience that Teaches how to Combat Chronic Disease with Plant-Based Nutrition

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INTRODUCTION

- A whole-food plant-based diet has been linked to prevention and reversal of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Physicians play a critical role in outlining behavioral modifications a patient may take to prevent, reduce, and reverse the burden of chronic disease. However, the lack of nutrition education in medical school creates a gap in physician training and graduates a physician workforce lacking these pertinent tools to treat disease.
- The “Plant Plunge” aims to remedy this gap with a whole-food plant-based nutrition immersion. Over four weeks, medical students can attend a lecture series from plant-based health advocates and physicians. Students are encouraged to adopt a plant-based diet during this period to foster deeper understanding of making this change. Our goal is for medical students to improve their nutrition knowledge and gain direct life experiences that will empower them to effectively provide nutrition education in future patient encounters.

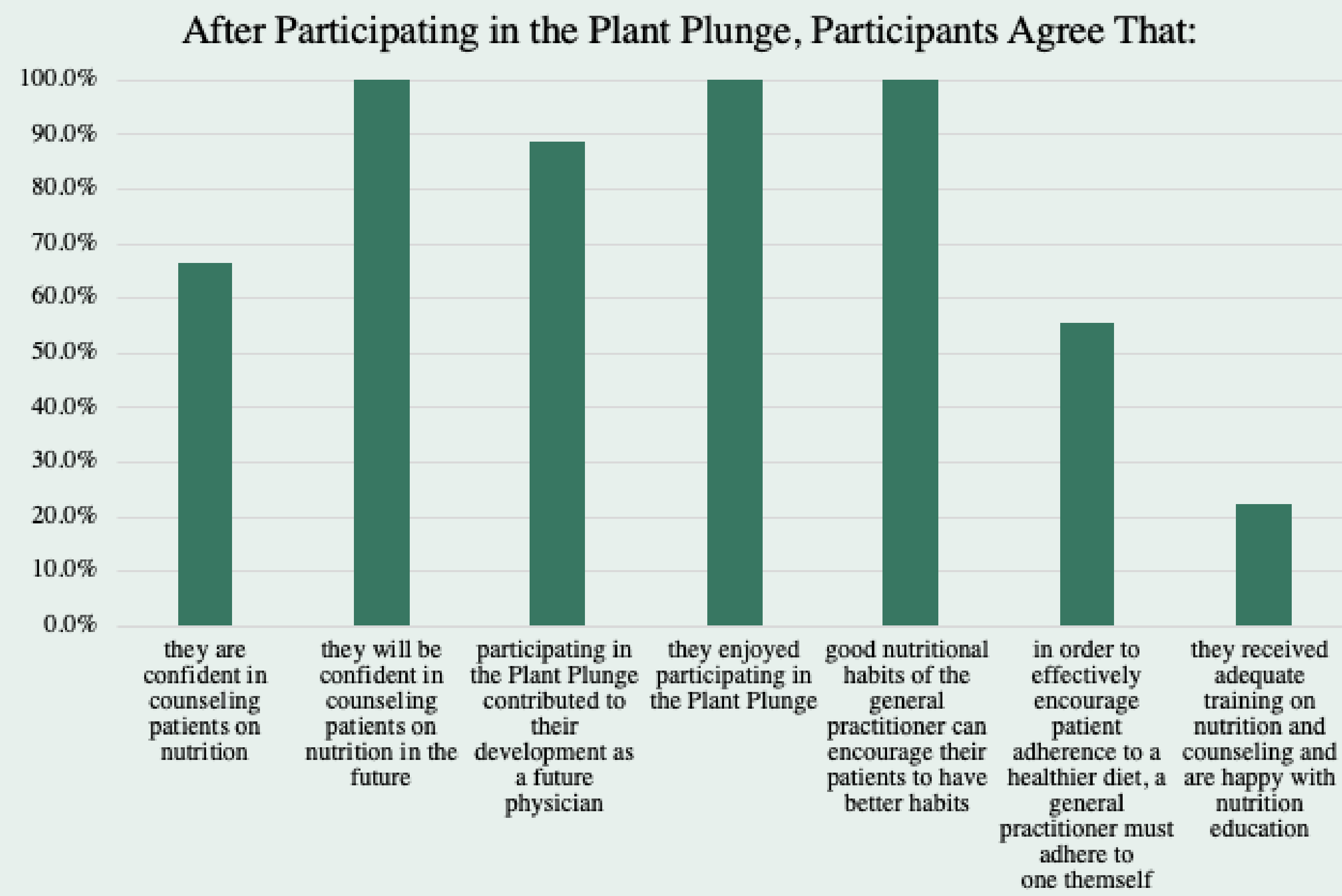
METHODS

- Wayne State University School of Medicine students will volunteer to participate in the “Plant Plunge”. A pre- and post-survey using a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach will assess students’ self-confidence in counseling a patient on adopting a whole-food plant-based diet. Questions will utilize a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended responses.



RESULTS

- 180 students attended at least 1 event, 8 students attended 3 or 4
- Lecture on a vegan diet for cardiovascular health was the most popular event of the "Plant Plunge" (n=157)
- For the survey: n=9 respondents; 3 M1s and 6 M2s



Where can nutrition be included in the current curriculum? Students Suggest:
 -HBF: Gastroenterology or Endocrinology Unit
 -Clinical Skills Course

78% of respondents disagree that:

- that they received adequate training on nutrition and counseling.
- they are happy with nutrition education

"I look forward to making suggestions to patients one day now knowing the information that I have gathered."

"More people should eat plant based and we need to be prepared to educate our patients and advocate for public health measures that take this into account."



CONCLUSION

- The “Plant Plunge” has the potential to provide a model for increasing medical student self-confidence in whole-food plant-based nutrition counseling.
- Future directions include implementation of a “Plant Plunge” at other medical schools and incorporation into the medical school curricula – such as part of the Clinical Skills Course – to formally eliminate the nutrition education gap.

LIMITATIONS

- There may be a self-selection bias in that students who are already interested in plant-based nutrition are those that end up participating in the "Plant Plunge" and this could skew the results.
- So far, there is a low survey response rate which may skew results. We are working to increase the response rate by reminding students of the survey.

Thank you to:

- Chickpea and Bean for sharing their expertise and life experiences throughout the Plant Plunge
- VegMichigan for donating gift bags of vegan food for the Plant Plunge
- Dr. Kim Williams for sharing a lecture on the cardiovascular benefits of a plant-based diet
- The Plant-Based Nutrition Group at WSUSOM for hosting the Plant Plunge