Abstract

Introduction: Little research has been conducted into the attitudes and knowledge of dietitians-nutritionists (DN) or of experts in human nutrition and dietetics (EHND) regarding functional foods (FFs). Objectives: To evaluate the knowledge of, interest in and predisposition towards FFs in Spanish DN and EHND, and how these professionals rate the potential benefits and risks associated with consuming FFs. Methods: 2100 DN and 122 EHND were asked to participate in a self-administered questionnaire. The results were expressed using percentages and the DN responses were compared with those of the EHND by means of chi-squared test. A significant difference was regarded as having been obtained if $P < 0.05$. Results: 204 DN and 112 EHND responded. After eliminating 45 surveys due to anomalies, 268 surveys were analyzed (170 from the DN, 8.1% participation; 98 from the EHND, 80.3% participation). No statistically significant differences were observed between the responses of the DN and the EHND except in: 1) the view that it was "dangerous" to consume certain FFs 4 times a day; and 2) the knowledge of the population regarding in which situations certain FFs should be consumed. Most of the professionals demonstrated good knowledge of FFs, consumed FFs, showed a positive attitude towards FFs and thought that the information provided to the consumer is insufficient. Discussion and conclusions: FFs are generally accepted by nutritional professionals. However, further study is required into the discrepancies between DN and EHND regarding the view that it is "dangerous" to consume certain FFs and regarding their evaluation of whether the public know in which situations certain FFs should be consumed.

Keywords