**Reflection on Nutrition for Children with Special Healthcare Needs**

Children with special health care requirements are at risk of developing one or more nutritional challenges, which can range from slow development and poor feeding to more serious gastrointestinal issues and metabolic disorders. Nutritional risk is determined by a variety of factors, including maternal and paternal nutritional status, preconception/prenatal nutrition, as well as physiological, medicinal, and behavioral risk factors after birth.1 Prior to reading this course, I wasn’t aware of how their healthcare needs were assessed, identified, and addressed.

The module that stood out to me the most was the one describing the typical feeding development of an infant as they age, how feeding skills and behaviors are assessed, and the types of feeding tubes and the appropriate routes and formulae for specific situations. It was interesting reading about the oral-motor and self-feeding skills and behaviors, positioning, and the appropriate kinds of foods for infants with different age ranges. It was great to get a refresher on the Nasogastric, Gastrostomy and Jejunal feeding tubes and learning about the types of commercial formulae for infants and children.

Something I highly appreciate about this entire course is the clarity with which every section is described. Due to studying Food Science & Human Nutrition in my undergraduate years, I had an idea about the different types of techniques used to obtain accurate anthropometric data, the various methods used for dietary assessment, the development and assessment of feeding skills, types and placements of feeding tubes, and the consequences of both high and low intake of fluids and fiber. However, that was several years ago and my memory has gotten rusty. I also had trouble retaining what I learned back then due to an overload of information due to studying other subjects and topics as well.

The inclusion of scenario-based questions in each module was very engaging and helped me better comprehend how to tackle each situation step-by-step, whether it was an infant with Down Syndrome or a child suffering from Cerebral Palsy. It was fascinating learning how to assess children with special healthcare needs, identifying the concerning issues related to nutrition and health, and providing interventions and family-based planning for each situation. Something that *really* stood out to me was how these modules teach you to set SMART goals. This course made me realize that the SMART goals I’ve been creating for some of the case studies I’ve done were lacking in specificity.

I didn’t have any major issues understanding the material. It was clear, precise, and rich with information. However, as I’m more of a visual and audio learner, I would’ve preferred if they linked short videos for some of these topics with engaging infographics and tables that would’ve made absorbing the material content easier. For example, having a table comparing and describing the different community services and programs would’ve been ideal.

**Source Material**

1.Ogata B, Wills H, Baer MT. Chapter 14 - Nutrition for Children With Special Health Care Needs. ScienceDirect. Published January 1, 2017. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B978012802928200014X>

Washington.edu. Published 2024. Accessed May 26, 2024. https://depts.washington.edu/pwdlearn/web/modules.php?pg=one

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