BACKGROUND

EthnoMed, an online medical resource created by the joint efforts of Harborview Medical Center and UW Health Sciences Libraries, works with several partners to create health education resources for various immigrant and refugee communities in the Seattle area. These resources are used by providers when discussing how culture-specific foods affect blood sugar. Recently, clinicians serving Punjabi-speaking Indian immigrants in the Seattle area identified a need for diabetes education material specific to the Indian immigrant community.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project was to use information gathered from the literature, community members, and providers to develop a visual education resource in the form of PowerPoint slides containing text and images.

METHODS

- Conducted a literature review for background research
- Interviewed local Indian community members about Indian culture and cuisine
- Interviewed providers for clinical insight
- Used information gathered to develop text
- Took original pictures of self-prepared and restaurant-sourced food
- Sourced some photos from Flickr Creative Commons
- Held focus group of community members to review first draft
- Consulted providers to review first draft
- Incorporated comments into next draft
- Final product will be translated into both English and Punjabi

IMPACT

- Printed format of project will be used in local clinics as visual tool during conversations between providers and Indian patients about diabetes
- Resource will help patients identify foods and drinks that have high and low impact on blood sugar
- Will be especially helpful in teaching recommended portion sizes of foods with high carbohydrate contents
- This resource will also be published on the EthnoMed website, making it accessible to patients and providers living in Washington, the U.S., and abroad

REFLECTIONS

Conducting this project during the COVID-19 pandemic presented interesting challenges and lessons:

- Cooking the food for this project at home vs. sourcing from community members provided cultural and culinary insights, but resulted in some dishes not accurately representing home-cooked food, and some photos may need to be retaken
- While in-person interactions are ideal for building connections, future projects may benefit from conducting some meetings over Zoom and the phone to increase reach to community members and providers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded by EthnoMed. Many thanks to project preceptors, Anna Cowan, MPH, and Christine Owen Wilson, for their support, flexibility, and guidance throughout this project. Special thanks to Lisa Messerli, RD, Nikhil Desai, MD, Aliya Haq, RD, and Galen Richards, BSN, for their clinical expertise, and to Hertej Sohi for her cultural insights. Thanks also to the generous community stakeholders who helped make this project relevant and useful.

QUICK FACTS

- Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death among Asian Americans.
- Asian Americans are ranked second in race or ethnicity with the highest percent of diagnosed diabetes, and first in undiagnosed diabetes.
- Indians have the highest prevalence of type 2 diabetes compared to any other Asian subgroup.
- Lifestyle interventions including increased physical activity and dietary changes can help manage and slow the progression of diabetes.

Picture illustrating a balanced plate with the recommended portion sizes of foods containing carbohydrates.

Example of a nutritious snack with low impact on blood sugar levels.

Example of a culturally relevant food that can be eaten in moderation on special occasions.

Example of a delicious traditional sweet to be eaten in moderation on special occasions.

Example of a nutritious snack with low impact on blood sugar levels.

Picture of salt lassi, an alternative to sweet lassis such as mango lassi, shown here in a large and small glass.

Example of a nutritious snack with low impact on blood sugar levels.