PEDIATRIC FOOD ALLERGY IN SCHOOLS: LEARNING WITH CHILDREN TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE



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BACKGROUND

• Rates of food allergy amongst school-aged children are at an all-time high, at 6-8%, or an average of 2 children in a typical-sized classroom.

- Strict allergen avoidance is the only means of effectively preventing food-triggered anaphylaxis.
- The school environment, where multiple children eat with often limited supervision, poses additional risks for accidental exposure from cross contamination.
- Food allergy education may minimize these risks through increased knowledge
- Little is known about children's preferences for evidence-based communication on anaphylaxis risk reduction

<u>aim</u>

 To understand the perceptions of students, with and without food allergies, so to inform the development of a school-based, food allergy education program.

<u>METHODS</u>

- Purposive recruitment of two groups of Manitoban children in Kindergarten - Grade 8, via social media and word-of-mouth: with and without parent-reported, physician-diagnosed food allergies.
- Children 7+ years and parents provided assent and consent, respectively. Individual telephone interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used identify main themes.

<u>RESULTS</u>

- A total of N=16 children, ages 6-13 years, with (n=7) and without (n=9) food allergies, participated.
- Data were independently read, coded, and evaluated by three research assistants using thematic analysis. Three themes were identified among the transcripts.

CONCLUSION

- Amongst school-aged children with and without food allergies, we identified substantial food allergy-related knowledge gaps and limited knowledge exchange, buffered against a desire to learn.
- Further pilot studies are needed to assess efficacy of inschool, food allergy educational programs on anaphylaxis risk reduction.

"I have not specifically told my teachers that I have a peanut allergy, but the school knows, and I suspect that they would have told the teachers"

~ On whether their teachers knew about their food allergy

Reliance vs. uncertainty to assist with food allergy management

> Recommended food allergy curricula: complementary perspectives

QUALITATIVE

THEMES

Limited food allergy knowledge "We never talked about food allergies at school"

"I don't know, I would get a first aid

kit or something"

~ When asked what they would do if a

classmate had an adverse reaction

"I just ensure that [my friends] are washing their hands to be careful for my safety and my other friend who does have an allergy"

> "How we can be safe and what we can bring to school"

> > Scan OR code

for author

affiliations

"How do people get food allergies, how do people know that they have a food allergy [...] and how we should just take care of people who have food allergies."

"I would want them to know to take my [EAI] out and like shoot me in my leg"