

## **An evaluation of health education intervention on hygienic status of food handlers in Aligarh- A three year experience**

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**Background:** Eating establishments provide food on a large scale and are important from the point of view of epidemiology of food borne diseases in the community. They have been identified as an important source for contamination of food and food borne disease outbreaks. Eating at these places significantly increases the risk of diarrhea among consumers.

**Objectives:** The present study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To find out the socio-demographic characteristics of food handlers working in eating establishments.
2. To assess the impact of health education intervention on hygienic status of food handlers.

**Methods:** The present longitudinal study was carried out by interview method during academic session from 2008-2009 to 2010-11 (3 Years) among 701 food handlers including cooks, helpers and waiters/ bearers employed by 18 kitchens establishments. IEC material and power point presentation was used for imparting health education. Data was collected, tabulated and analyzed statistically using appropriate tests of significance.

**Results:** Majority of food handlers (36.8%) belonged to age group of 18-30 years followed by 31 to 40 years (30.8%). There were 95.6% male workers and only 4.4% female worker, employed mainly in girl's hostel. Majority of workers were illiterate (41.1%). Apron and caps were not used by most of them (84.5%) but the dresses were clean. Hands and nails were clean in large number of participants (69.9%). 59.8% workers were not addicted to any type of tobacco. On an arbitrary scale of hygiene, general conditions were satisfactory in 63.7% food handlers. Overall hygiene status of the food handlers improved during the three years (2009 to 2011).

**Conclusion:** There was marked improvement among food handler's knowledge, attitude and practice towards personal hygiene. Certain steps should be taken to improve the status of food hygiene in food service establishments like banning smoking and the use of all tobacco products during food handling. Strict periodical examination for early identification of morbid conditions should be carried out.