Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding nutrition labeling among support staff in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang. The study location involved two faculties which are Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Education Studies. Data were collected in December 2007 using a questionnaire distributed to 100 subjects chosen through systematic sampling. Results showed that 77 subjects comprising 37 men and 40 women responded to the questionnaire (response rate = 77%). The mean age of the respondents was 36.1 ± 10.5 years while the mean monthly expenditure related to food was RM 516.20 ± 349.30. Seventy-two (93.5 %) respondents had heard about nutrition labeling and more than half (87.0%) acquired the information from television, followed by magazines (68.8%) and newspapers (55.8%). More than three out of four respondents (76.6%) chose ‘aiding in food selection and purchase’ and 64.9% chose ‘providing useful information to consumers’ as what they understood about nutrition labeling. The study found that the overall respondents’ knowledge on nutrition labeling was high with a mean score of 76.9 ± 16.9%. In the attitude section, the respondents showed a positive attitude towards nutrition labeling, with 88.3% of them scoring above 75%. Thirty-nine respondents (50.6%) showed moderately good practice when purchasing food and reading nutrition labels with a mean score of 78.2 ± 12.1%. Most respondents (88.3%) indicated that they will read nutrition labels when purchasing a food product for the first time. The Pearson correlation test showed a significant correlation between knowledge and attitude (r=0.597, p<0.01) and between knowledge and practice (r=0.247, p<0.05) related to nutrition labeling. A significant correlation was also found between respondents’ attitude and practice (r=0.432, p<0.01). However, there was no significant correlation between monthly food expenditure and knowledge, attitude and practice regarding nutrition labeling. Further, it was found that knowledge was dependent on education level (c²=13.562, p=0.035) whereas attitude was dependent on ethnicity (c²=38.770, p=0.029), education level (c²=105.325, p=0.000) and monthly income (c²=79.054, p=0.000). Overall, even though most respondents attained high scores, there are still gaps in their knowledge, attitude and practice regarding nutrition labeling. Therefore, efforts should be made to continue to promote nutrition labeling to the consumers.