



Green Prescription: Analyzing and Encouraging Plant-Based Eating for Student Physicians in a Four Week Seminar

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Introduction

- A whole food, plant-based diet (WFPBD) has been associated with a reduced risk of chronic diseases [1].
- Physicians play an important role in educating patients about nutrition and helping them to follow a healthy diet [2].
- Medical education often lacks sufficient nutrition training to prepare future physicians for counseling patients on dietary interventions [3].
- The “Plant Plunge” is a 4-week program consisting weekly nutrition education seminars, during which students are encouraged to follow a WFPBD [4]. The program is hosted by Chickpea and Bean, a local non-profit promoting health eating.



Aims and Objectives

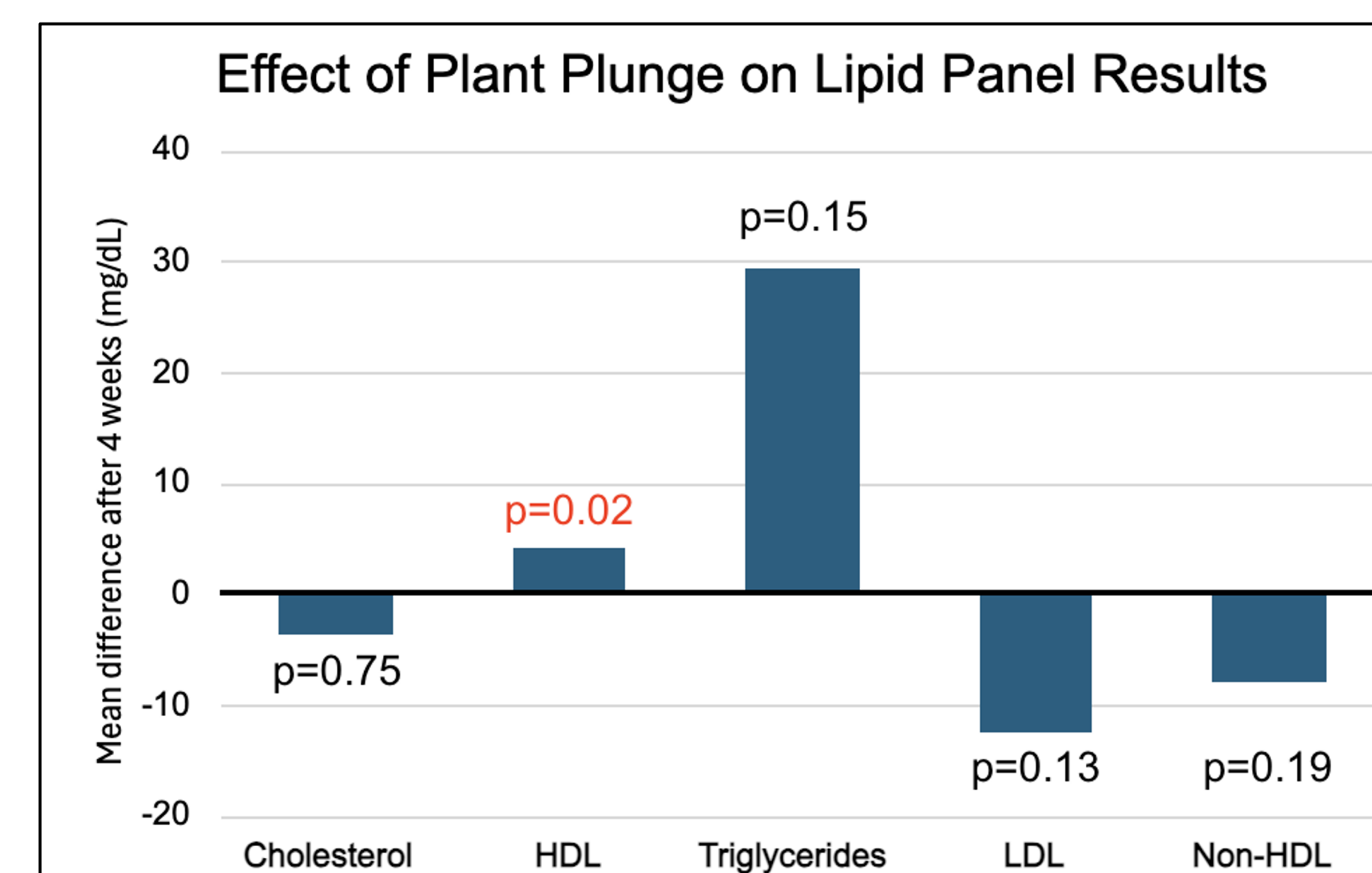
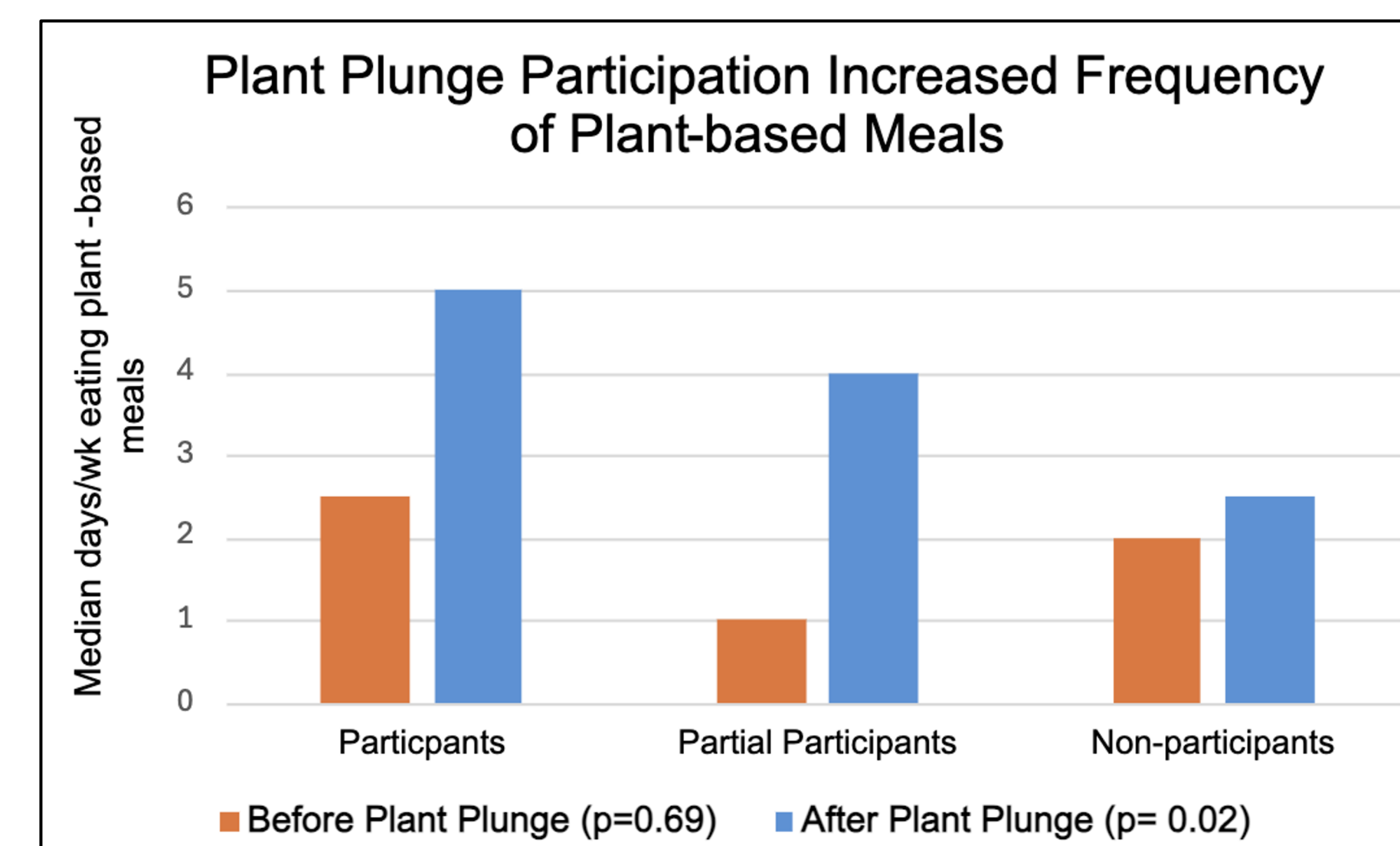
- To evaluate the impact of the Plant Plunge challenge on medical students’ body weight, blood pressure (BP), and blood cholesterol levels.
- To evaluate medical students’ attitudes toward WFPBD.
- To evaluate medical students’ perceptions of nutrition education

Methods

- OUWB medical students were invited to participate in the Plant Plunge challenge, which included four weekly one-hour nutrition seminars, WFPBD dinners, and pre- and post-program health screenings.
- Health screenings consisted of weight, BP, glucose, total cholesterol, HDL, triglycerides, LDL, and non-HDL cholesterol for participants and partial participants of the Plant Plunge.
- Post-program surveys were distributed to all medical students, including students who did not participate in the Plant Plunge, to evaluate attitudes toward plant-based eating and nutrition education and perceptions of the seminars for those who participated.
- Participants were defined as any student who attended at least one lecture session, and non-participants were defined as any student who answered the survey but did not engage in any Plant Plunge events.

Results

- 48 students completed the survey, including 19 participants and 29 non-participants.
- Participants demonstrated a statistically significant increase in plant-based meal consumption during the program and reported greater mindfulness regarding food choices.
- Many participants expressed increased confidence in reading nutrition labels and selecting plant-based options.
- Participants widely agreed that the seminars provided sufficient nutrition education to implement and sustain dietary changes.
- Additionally, 30 students underwent pre- and post-program health screenings. Participants experienced increased HDL cholesterol levels ($p=0.02$) and weight loss ($p=0.01$), and systolic BP decreased, approaching statistical significance ($p=0.06$).



Conclusions

- Nutrition plays a fundamental role in preventive medicine, yet there is often minimal formal nutrition education during medical school.
- The Plant Plunge demonstrated that a brief, structured four-week intervention can effectively enhance medical students’ knowledge, dietary habits, and measurable health markers.

Discussion

- Medical schools should incorporate more nutrition education into their curricula.
- WFPBD can improve health biomarkers in a four-week period among medical students.

References

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