**The *Healthy Start* nutrition education material**

**Facilitating the transition into a new food environment for newly resettled immigrants and refugees**

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**ABSTRACT**

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| **Background:** Nutrition is an important determinant of an immigrant’s health status. Previous studies have shown that resettled immigrants and refugees are likely to suffer from malnutrition and are at risk of food insecurity. Unfamiliarity with the new food environment, unavailability of foods used in traditional diets, limited knowledge of or information on shopping and cooking options, together with economic constraints and low health and nutrition literacy, may lead to poorer diets. Nutrition education can address immigrants’ and refugees’ challenges related to the transition to a new food environment. A barrier to effective nutrition education is health workers’ and other professionals’ lack of necessary competence to communicate about health and nutrition in a culturally adapted way. Providing nutrition education resources suitable for personnel working with newly resettled immigrants, can improve communication with immigrant and refugees about health and nutrition topics at an early stage of the migration process and facilitate the adoption of healthier diets. Public health nutritionists can have a key role in developing culture sensitive nutrition communication tools and build up capacity among other health professionals. **The aim** of this paper is to describe the development a nutrition education text and illustration material (*Healthy Start*) for newly resettled immigrants and refugees in Norway. These resources are meant to be used in what is called the *Introduction Programme for New Immigrants in Norway* which is a mandatory course for immigrants and refugees organized by each municipality. **Methods:** The *Healthy Start* is a collaborative project between Oslo Municipality’s Resource Centre for Migration Health, the Public Health Nutrition Education Unit at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences and the Norwegian Diabetes Association. *Healthy Start* used the Intervention Mapping (IM) approach and was developed considering the literacy level and cultural preferences of a heterogeneous group of immigrants and refugees as well as the need of cultural competence of nutrition educators who perform health and nutrition communication in this field. Public Health Nutrition students were actively involved in the development and pilot testing of the *Healthy Start* during a compulsory trainee period. The materials were pilot tested in four introduction programs. Qualitative interviews were conducted to evaluate these pilot tests. Additionally, four independent raters evaluated the *Healthy Start* materials using the Suitability Assessment of Materials (SAM) which is applied to objectively assess (score) the suitability of written health information. **Results:** The *Healthy Start* education resources were divided into 10 modules, based on the Norwegian Nutrition recommendations. Each module had a similar structure consisting of (a) a teachers’ instruction manual on how to use the resources; (b) a detailed template stating the aims of each module, the text to be used by instructors, and additional information about the topics of the module; (c) a PowerPoint presentation to help the programme advisors visualizing the material during the course and to provide the course participants with information; and (d) an activity book for the course participants with exercises to perform during and after the course to enhance comprehension and learning. Programme advisors interviewed during the evaluation considered *Healthy Start* as easy to use, culturally adapted and useful for the participants. The independent evaluators using the suitability assessment of materials (SAM evaluated Healthy Start as ‘superior’. **Conclusion:** Culture sensitive, simple to use education materials such as *Healthy Start* can promote information about food and health to refugees and immigrants and facilitate the transition into a new food environment. This can help to achieve equal rights to healthcare for all, which is high on the governmental agenda in Norway. Healthy Start is currently used in a number of Introduction Programmes in Norway and in other settings involving health and nutrition communication with immigrants with low literacy. **Implications:** The development of the *Healthy Start* material provides an example of a role for the Public Health Nutrition education and its students in building up capacity on culture sensitive nutrition communication at community level. Translated and nationally adapted versions of the original Norwegian *Healthy Start* nutrition education resources could be used in numerous settings involving health and nutrition communication and counseling with immigrants and refugees, especially the ones having low health and nutrition literacy.  |

**KEYWORDS** [List 3 to 5 keywords]

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| Keyword 1 | Nutrition Education |
| Keyword 2 | Refugees |
| Keyword 3 | Health Literacy |
| Keyword 4 | Public Health Nutrition |
| Keyword 5 |  |
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**SUBJECT CATEGORIES** [Select 3 to 5 WoS Subject Categories that the paper covers. Wos Subject Categories can be found in the first column of Table 1]

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| WoS Subject Category 1 | Nutrition & Dietetics |
| WoS Subject Category 2 | Health Care Sciences & Services |
| WoS Subject Category 3 | Education & Educational Research |
| WoS Subject Category 4 |  |
| WoS Subject Category 5 |  |

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