

**Author:** Ruth Wallace

**Co Author:** Amanda Devine, Leesa Costello (Edith Cowan University)

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A nutritious diet early in life can have a significant effect on future health and wellbeing. Given the increasing numbers of children attending childcare, this setting is strategically placed to teach and establish positive eating habits.

This research sought to establish a 'best practice' website (SNAC) to assist childcare staff increase their nutrition knowledge and confidence to provide a healthy eating environment. Discussion boards facilitated an online community-of-practice providing peer support.

This qualitative, netnographic study examined the needs of staff, determined changes in nutrition knowledge, attitudes, confidence and emerging sense of community providing peer support. Alongside the participatory, netnographic methodology utilised, interviews, observations, and surveys were also conducted.

Despite the 'netnographic slog' required to establish an online community of practice, findings suggested that SNAC was well-utilised and valued by >1300 members, attracting >90,000 page views and >600 posts/comments. Staff valued the concept of 'information wrapped in support', and a sense of community emerged. Although staff reported positive attitudes and high self-efficacy towards healthy eating, disparities emerged between reported and observed knowledge and behaviours.

Although often difficult and time-consuming, the need for public health policy changes in the Australian childcare setting is highlighted, reprioritising and refocusing optimal nutrition for future health and wellbeing. The disparities identified the need for shorter-term strategies, including online or peer support interventions and more traditional, face-to-face approaches. In essence, new policies to address the higher-level barriers experienced by childcare institutions are required, or communities-of-practice like SNAC may only serve a relatively small group of motivated users.