

ABSTRACT

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a chronic illness with serious impacts on nutritional status, eating, and relationships with food. The research question was: How, if at all, are the food, nutrition, and eating experiences of people with IBD who live in Nova Scotia relevant to medical nutrition therapy, nutrition counselling, and research?

Objectives: 1.) To purposively recruit adults who live with IBD in Nova Scotia to participate in unstructured interviews; 2.) to analyze the findings using content categorization; 3.) to share the findings through knowledge mobilization.

Methods: Participants recruited via word of mouth and connections through Ostomy Halifax engaged in 1:1 open-ended interviews about how IBD has affected their food, nutrition, and eating experiences. Transcripts underwent content categorization using the Organizational Framework for Examining Nutrition Narratives (OFFENN). Narrative information was organized into table format based on the OFFENN and underwent thematic analysis.

Results: Ten themes emerged regarding the effect of IBD on eating, including concerns for mental health due to traumatic food experiences, sense of belonging in familial and social environments, an altered relationship with food, altered perception of body image resulting in disordered eating habits, adopting coping mechanisms to define a new normal, hindrance in achieving one's full potential in life, and the value of experiential knowledge and a shared experience. Advice for health professionals include a desire for individualized care, a need for nutrition professionals to have specialized knowledge in diet and IBD, and the need for long-term respectful relationships between client and practitioner.

Implications & Conclusions: Although the biomedical impacts of IBD are well researched, there is little attention given to the inter- and intra-personal impacts of living with the condition. By examining the ways in which IBD affects all aspects of a person's life, health practitioners can deepen their understanding of the disease and be better positioned to have a positive impact on their clients' overall quality of life, in addition to ensuring excellence in medical care.