

Fuel for Life: A Literature Review of Nutrition Education and Assessment among Older Adults Living at Home

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WHAT WE LEARNED

Health professionals and family caregivers feel underprepared to assess, educate and meet the nutritional needs of older adults living at home

Background

Older adults living at home are at particular high risk for poor nutrition due to the likelihood of living with chronic diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, heart failure and cognitive impairment, as well as the financial instability and social isolation that often plagues this population

Objective

To conduct a review of the literature on nutritional assessment and education of older adults living at home

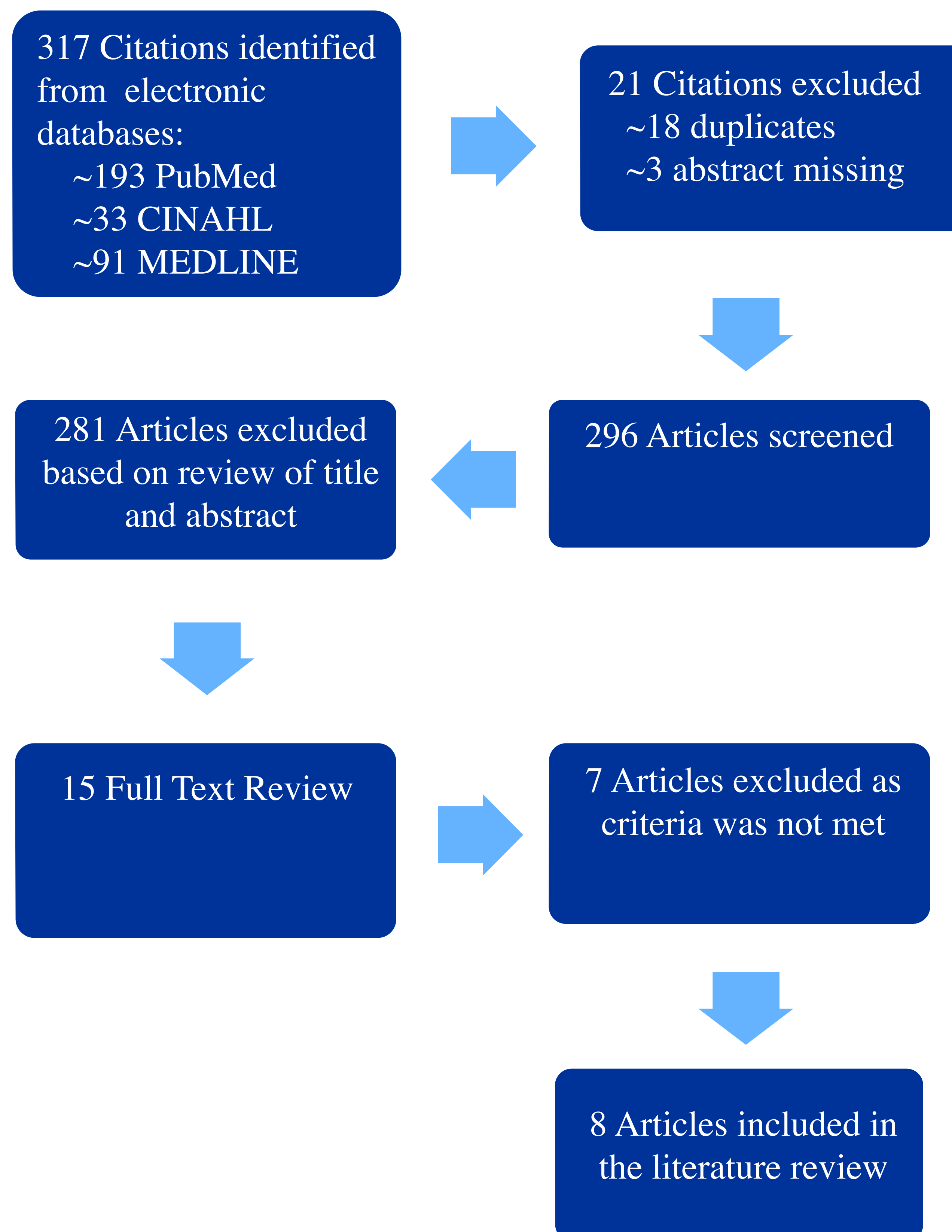
Methods

- PubMed, CINAHL, and MedLine databases were searched for English language studies published between 1998 and 2016
- Search terms: nutrition, older adults, assessment, education
 - Additional terms: community, home health
- Eight studies eligible for inclusion
 - Five concerning barriers to adequate nutrition
 - Three concerning nutritional interventions
- Two randomized control studies
- Six studies conducted interviews, focus groups and or mailed surveys

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Study Selection



Major Themes

- Nurses are most often the professionals who provide nutritional care
- Individualized nutritional counseling and the development and testing of a malnutrition screening tools have been tested to identify and mitigate risk for poor nutrition
- Barriers to adequate nutrition:
 - Time constraints
 - Lack of interprofessional communication and collaboration
 - Poor educational materials
 - ~Health professionals and family caregivers feel underprepared to assess, educate and meet the nutritional needs of older adults
 - ~Health professionals feel family caregivers do not consider nutrition a priority
- Educational materials should be simple with limited medical jargon
- There is a paucity of research in the United States regarding the nutritional education and assessment of the older adult population

Discussion

- Several barriers to providing adequate nutritional education and assessment to older adults living at home exist
- Additional research is needed to learn how to most effectively assess and intervene with older adults at risk for poor nutrition