

ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE REGARDING FOOD ALLERGY

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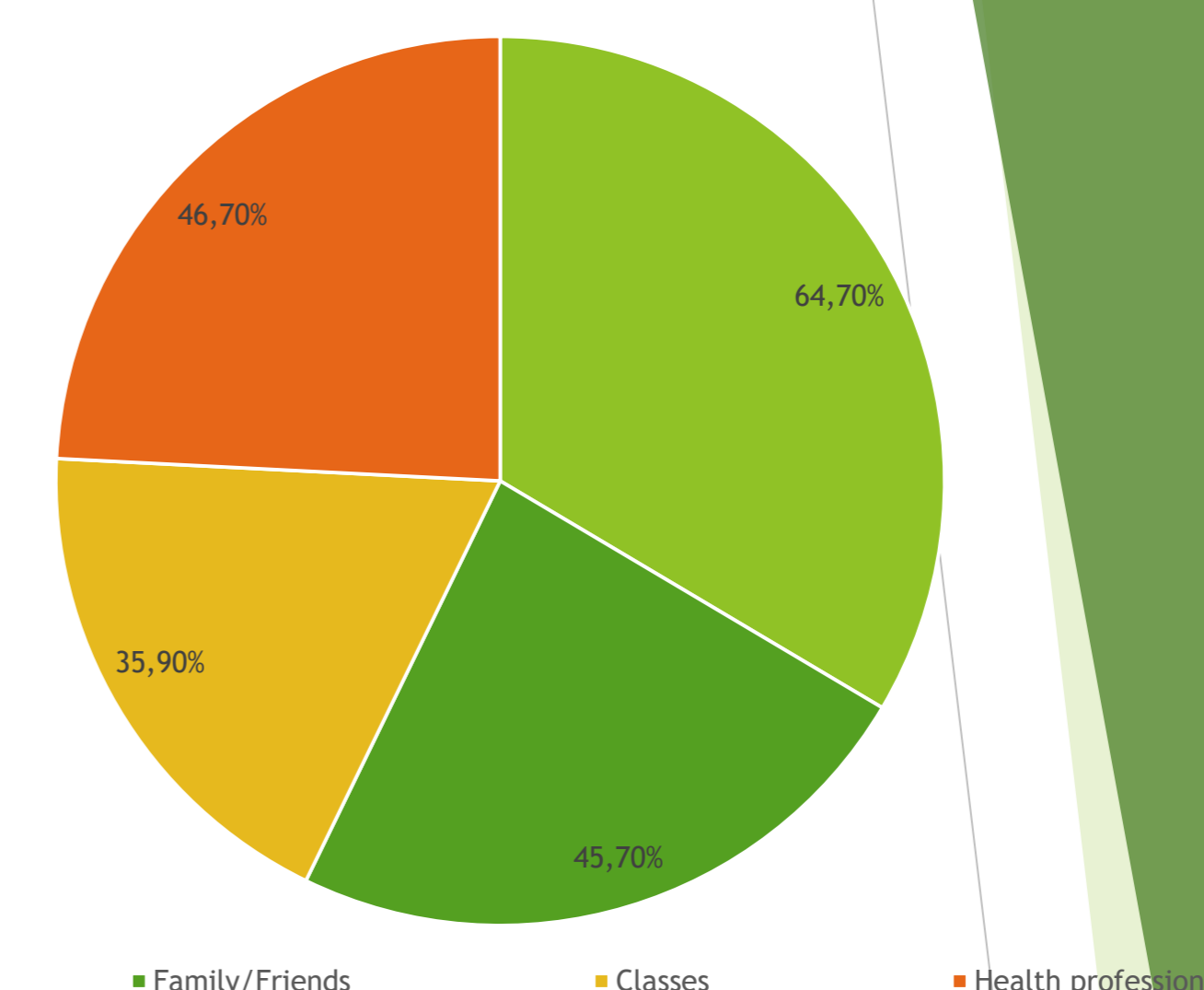
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AIM:

The aim of this study was to explore the knowledge and attitudes regarding food allergies in a sample of Serbian general population.

METHODS:

In this cross-sectional study, conducted in May 2021, data was collected via online self-reported questionnaire, from 184 people (65.2% female and 34.8% male), different ages from 18 to 72 (on average 28) and of various educational background.



Picture 1. Sources of information about food allergy

RESULTS:

Among participants only 32 (17.4%) have reported food allergy, and, for the majority of these subjects (66%), the condition was not confirmed by the clinician. More than a third of surveyed people (37%) expressed concern that the restaurants are especially risky for allergen ingestion due to limited opportunity to exert dietary control... Furthermore, 82.1% of participants agreed that consumers should carefully read food labels in order to prevent exposure to potentially harmful items. Only half of the respondents (56,5%) identified proper procedures in treating common symptoms of allergic reactions, including rashes and anaphylaxis, while 64.1% knew that the food to which a person is allergic to must be strictly avoided. Findings of this study imply that food allergy knowledge level and certain attitudinal determinants among general population require improvement.

Foods that were mostly reported as the cause of allergic reactions	Distribution of respondents (%)
Nuts	36.4%
Soybeans	15.2%
Peanuts	15.2%
Dairy products	12.1%
Strawberries	12.1%

CONCLUSION:

This study shows that there are certain gaps in the knowledge of general population. That and the growing prevalence of food allergies are the main reasons why the tailored educational programs should be developed. Those programs might be beneficial for the familiarization with the condition, early recognition of symptoms, and promotion of appropriate reactions. Further research is warranted to identify subpopulations with particularly poor knowledge or misbeliefs, which should be targeted for interventions.

