

Title

The food transition: psychological approaches to implementing dietary change in the hospital.

Problem statement

Food has an enormous potential to improve both patient, employee, and planetary health (1). However, hospitals have been reluctant to adopt dietary policies (2,3). The data supporting such healthy and planet-friendly dietary changes are unequivocal. Red meat is associated with adverse health effects, such as gastrointestinal cancer. Western-type diet, i.e., a diet that is high on saturated fatty acids, cholesterol, and sugar, is main contributing factor of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. In addition, ultra-processed foods are the latest discovered high-risk factor for these diseases. From an ecological perspective, high consumption of animal-derived products and especially cow-derived products put a high strain on the environment through the amount of animal feed necessary, the methane production by cattle, nitrogen excretion in animal feces and land used for farming which reduces biodiversity.

A more healthy and ecologically sustainable diet contains no ultra-processed foods, more pulses, nuts and whole grains, fresh produce (fruit and vegetable) and unsaturated fats. While the promotion of fruit and vegetables has not been contested, the shift from meat and dairy to plant-based protein sources has met with resistance in care and cure institutions from both catering organizations and customers. Health care professionals, such as physicians, nurses, and dietitians, have been supportive and instrumental in projects to move towards dietary changes (4,5,6). These initiatives have also shown that plant-based alternatives are readily commercially available. We hypothesize that the barriers to accepting the changed diet from consumer side might be overcome by psychological interventions (7).



Figure 1: The planetary health diet (source <https://eatforum.org/learn-and-discover/the-planetary-health-diet/>)

The aim of this research project is to test the potential of psychological interventions within a hospital setting as a case, to adopt a plant-based dietary policy change.

Research question(s)

Within the boundaries of the psychological tool kit: what are effective factors in stimulating the adoption of a healthy diet in hospitals and hospital restaurants?

- Sub question: how can contextual factors (e.g., lighting, olfactory stimulation, decoration, positioning) affect spontaneous food choices?
- Sub question: how can added information (e.g., display texts, brochures) affect spontaneous food choices? What is the impact of information about health effects vs information about sustainability effects? What is the effect of setting norms for appropriate behavior?
- Sub question: how can the acceptance be stimulated for restricted food choices, such as the absence of cow-based products in the restaurant?

Expected type of work

The study can be further shaped by the student if supervisors approve it. The approach should preferably be experimental, although structured and reliable observation is an acceptable alternative. Work could include but is not limited to stakeholder analysis, choice observations, interviews, questionnaires.

References

- Eat Lancet website: <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/>



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- Med J Aust. 2020 May;212(8):384-384.e1. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50576> .
- Hospital food environments: a human and planetary health opportunity Genevieve Moseley , Luke
- <https://goedezorgproefje.nl/>
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- Spajic, Georgia Behrens PMID: 32277481 DOI: 10.5694/mja2.50576 Front. Nutr., 15 October 2021 Sec. Nutrition and Sustainable Diets <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2021.740376> The Drivers of Environmentally Sustainable Hospital Foodservices Stefanie Carino, Shirin Malekpour, Judi Porter and Jorja Collins

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