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Title

The role of dietary patterns in preventing depression: insights from the MoodFOOD project

Abstract

Introduction: Depression will be the second leading cause of disability globally by 2020. There is increasing evidence that healthy dietary patterns may play a role in preventing depression. The MoodFOOD project was designed to gain a better understanding of the relationship between diet and depression. This presentation will discuss findings of a meta-analysis that examined the association between dietary patterns and depression and discuss these findings in the context of existing literature.

Methods: We developed a standardised protocol to assess the association of depression with three a priori dietary patterns: Alternative Healthy Eating Index (AHEI-2010), the Mediterranean diet score (MDS) and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet. Included were data of 23,026 participants from cohorts that measured both diet and depression cross-sectionally: InCHIANTI (Italy), LASA, NESDA, HELIUS (Netherlands), ALSWH (Australia), and Whitehall (UK). Three cohorts had repeated measures allowing prospective analysis (Whitehall, InCHIANTI, ALSWH). Analyses were conducted by researchers of the individual studies and meta-analysed centrally using random-effects models.

Results: Both cross-sectional and prospective analyses showed a statistically significant protective effect of all three dietary patterns on continuous and dichotomous measures of depressive symptoms. For example, the association between the MDS and dichotomous depressive symptoms using a cut-off yielded a standardised B of -0.14 (95%CI -0.18; -0.10); this was consistent with findings from prospective analysis: standardised B -0.13 (95% CI -0.20;-0.05).

Conclusion: These findings provide evidence that healthy dietary patterns are associated with fewer depressive symptoms.

Key references

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Key messages

- Based on population-based studies we conclude that there is evidence that eating a healthy dietary pattern helps reduce depressive symptoms in the general population.
- Evidence from the MooDFOOD study underscores existing dietary guidelines aimed to improve the diets of European populations.
- Dietary approaches are intended as an addition, not as a replacement, to current care guidelines for the treatment of depression.