

Author

Cushen, Samantha RD, PhD

Project Manager

The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD)

Ireland

Title

Assessing health professional's knowledge regarding snacks, dried fruit and dental health: a survey of European dietitians and dentists

Abstract

The World Health Organization addresses the roles and responsibilities of both dietitians and oral health care professionals in promoting oral health and the consideration of diet in the prevention of oral diseases. Collaboration between dietetics and dental professionals is recommended for oral health promotion and disease prevention and intervention. Despite some shared goals, conflicting dietary advice persists among different healthcare professions, causing confusion to patients and the general public. One such example is the advice given to patients regarding dried fruit. Dried fruit is recommended to be eaten with meals only rather than as a snack because there is a belief that it 'sticks' to teeth. A comprehensive review of the evidence published last year found a lack of good quality studies to support the advice that dried fruit should only be eaten with meals and not as a snack. Research shows that dietitians are mainly concerned with the connection between nutrition and general health, while dentist's consultations are mainly focused on the effects of food on the oral health. This may lead to a conflict between dietary messages. There is an absence of a guideline accepted by all professions on reducing inconsistencies on dietary advice.

This quantitative study aims to gather the views of two different health professions (dentists and dietitians) in the importance of targeting diet as a common risk factor, their experiences and barriers in addressing conflicting health messages on diet, and their recommendations for better cross-professional coordination. We will use a self-administered online survey that will consist of open and closed structured questions based on existing knowledge of diet, nutrition, dried fruit, snacking and periodontal health.

Key references

Sadler, M.J., 2017. Dried fruit and dental health—how strong is the evidence? *Nutrition Bulletin*, 42(4), pp.338-345.

Key messages

1. This project will produce very useful information which will inform EFAD and other stakeholders about the knowledge dietitians and dentists have in relation to oral health and diet.
2. We will establish whether differences exist between these professional groups and identify conflicts in nutritional knowledge

Questions

1. What studies have (intervention and cohort studies) shown the effects of dried fruit on dental caries?
2. What is the public health message in different European countries in relation to dried fruit and snacking?