

Invited Speaker Abstract

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Title of Presentation

Healthy eating at work: the effect of nudging in Dutch worksite cafeterias

1. Abstract

Introduction: Currently, many studies focus on how the environment can be changed to encourage healthier eating behaviour, referred to as choice architecture or nudging. However, to date, the effects of these strategies have not been investigated much in real-life settings, such as worksite cafeterias, or only in the short term.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to examine the effects of a healthy worksite cafeteria ('the worksite cafeteria 2.0', hereafter WC 2.0) intervention on Dutch employees' purchase behaviour over a 12 week period.

Methodology: We conducted a randomised controlled trial in 30 worksite cafeterias. Worksite cafeterias were randomly assigned to either the intervention or control group. The intervention aimed to encourage employees to make healthier food choices during their daily worksite cafeteria visits. The intervention consisted of 14 simultaneously executed strategies based on nudging and social marketing theories, involving product, price, placement, and promotion.

Results: Adjusted multilevel models showed significant positive effects of the intervention on purchases for three of the seven studied product groups, viz. healthier sandwiches, healthier cheese as a sandwich filling and the inclusion of fruit. The elevated sales of these healthier meal options were constant throughout the 12 week intervention period.

Conclusion: This study shows that the way worksite cafeterias offer products affects purchase behaviour. Situated nudging and social marketing-based strategies are effective in promoting healthier choices and aim to remain effective over time. Some product groups only indicated an upward trend in purchases. Such an intervention could ultimately help prevent and reduce obesity in the Dutch working population.

2. key references

Velema, E., Vyth, E. L., Hoekstra, T., & Steenhuis, I. H. M. (2018). Nudging and social marketing techniques encourage employees to make healthier food choices: a randomized controlled trial in 30 worksite cafeterias in The Netherlands. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 107(2):236-246. doi:10.1093/ajcn/nqx045

Velema, E., Vyth, E. L., & Steenhuis, I. H. (2017). Using nudging and social marketing techniques to create healthy worksite cafeterias in the Netherlands: intervention development and study design. *BMC Public Health*, 17(1), 63. doi:10.1186/s12889-016-3927-7

3. key messages

- The way food is offered in a worksite cafeteria affects purchase behavior.
- The strategies of the 'healthy worksite cafeteria' intervention are partly effective to encourage a healthier choice.
- Presenting a larger share of healthier options, having attractive prices for healthier options and implementing multiple strategies simultaneously seemed to work best.

