

Invited Speaker Abstract

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Title

Nudging towards more plant-based consumption in a cafeteria setting among adolescents and older consumers

1. Abstract

Background: The characteristics of a healthy, sustainable and ethical diet are well supported by scientific evidence, widely accepted by all societal actors and usually translated into national and international recommendations (high consumption of foods of plant origin, limited consumption of both highly processed foods and foods of animal origin). Nevertheless, consumption of fruits and vegetables remains below recommendations worldwide and thus a constant challenge for dietitians. Epidemiologic data supports small changes towards a better dietary quality (measured e.g. as the Mediterranean Diet Score) as feasible, long-lasting and health-promoting. Therefore, facilitating plant-based choices through small and repetitive changes could contribute to achieving dietary goals.

Objective: To summarise lessons from systematic reviews and empirical intervention studies on the effect of nudging towards plant-based choices, and to highlight practical issues for implementation at larger scale.

Results: Few studies provide measurable effects of nudges on plant-based consumption, and even less have explored consumer attitudes towards such interventions. Food choices in cafeterias are influenced by manipulation of food product order or proximity. Placing vegetables first in a buffet line combined with allowing self-composition of salad or providing status-quo (default) servings increase actual vegetable intake without affecting total quantity and overall evaluation of the meal experience. Introduction of innovative plant-based foods to food service operations requires considering familiarity and contextual aspects.

Conclusion: Nudging could be a strategy to facilitate plant-based choices for the consumer and a contributing action towards adherence to nutritional recommendations. Evidence supports placing of vegetables first in a buffet line and provision of default choices as effective measures at food service operations.

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