

The relationship between dietary patterns and depressive symptoms in older adults

Abstract

Background: Late-life depression is a prevalent mental illness that occurs among adults aged 65 years and older that is becoming more significant with the on-going aging of population worldwide. It is a multietiological disease that appears to be more likely to be modified by lifestyle factors, including nutrition, than depression in younger age.

Aims: The aim of this diploma thesis was to summarize a wide array of risk factors for late-life depression, introduce the proposed pathways for the effect of a healthy diet on late-life depression, and longitudinally assess the relationship between depressive symptoms and adherence to a healthy dietary pattern.

Methods: Longitudinal data from 4117 Czech participants of the Health, Alcohol and Psychosocial factors In Eastern Europe study were used. Data on depressive symptoms were collected using the CES-D scale at six time points, nutritional data come from a food frequency questionnaire collected at baseline. Growth curve modelling was used for the main analysis, and subsequently for a sex-stratified analysis.

Results: The results showed an inverse association between the intensity of depressive symptoms and adherence to a healthy diet. CES-D score was lower at baseline and in all subsequent waves in respondents with high HDI. Furthermore, the relationship differed between sexes, with a significant inverse association in women but not in men.

Conclusion: This thesis enhances our understanding of nutritional psychiatry in a commonly overlooked population of older adults from the Central and Eastern European region, and further underscores the need for more research.

Key words: late-life depression, LLD, healthy dietary patterns, HDI, HAPIEE