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The association between depressive symptoms and diet in people at high risk of cardiovascular disease

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Background: Depression is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Although maintenance of a healthy diet and healthy weight are probably the most crucial ways to prevent CVD but the relationship between depression and diet in people at high risk of CVD has not been fully explored. This study aimed to examine the relationship between depression and diet in a sample of people at high risk of CVD by comparing the differences in nutrient intake between depressed and non-depressed participants.

Methods: A cross-sectional study using baseline data of 1704 participants from the MOVE-IT trial, a randomised controlled trial assessing the effectiveness of a healthy lifestyle intervention for people at high risk of cardiovascular disease. The participants were aged between 40-74 years and were recruited from primary care in south London. A 24-hour dietary recall was coded and analysed using DietPlan 7 software. Sucrose, saturated fatty acids and fibres were selected as nutrients of interest. Depression was measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9, a 9 item self-report measure of depressive symptoms, and participants were categorised as depressed or non-depressed. Statistical analysis using SPSS software was used to evaluate the relationship between depression and dietary patterns taking into account the potentially confounding variables including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and pre-diabetes status. Pre-diabetes was defined as fasting blood glucose 6.1-6.9 mmol/L. LSD test was used to adjust for multiple comparison groups.

Results: There were no significant differences in the intake of saturated fatty acids ($p=.998$) and sucrose ($p=.668$) between those categorised as depressed or non-depressed. A significant difference was found in the intake of fibre ($p=0.040$). People with depressive symptoms consume 2.06gm less fibre than those without depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: We found an inverse association between the intake of fibre and depressive symptoms. Underreporting of sucrose and fat may account for their negative effect.

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