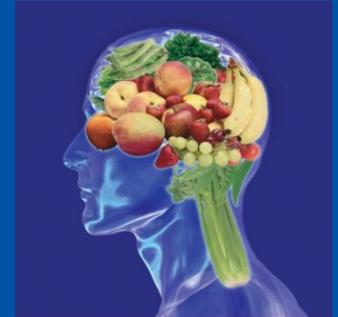


MooDFOOD

PREVENTING DEPRESSION THROUGH FOOD



GAMIAN-Europe
European Research project



Jan-Feb-March
2018

IN THIS ISSUE

Dear reader,

One month has already passed since the start of the year, so it is time for a new edition of this newsletter. As announced in the August edition 2017, many results of the MoodFOOD studies have now been made public.

We have selected the information that we believe to be relevant for you as readers of GAMIAN-Europe's newsletter. We try to focus as much as possible on matters related to how appropriate food and food behaviours can serve as a tool for (secondary) prevention of depression.

We do hope you will enjoy reading this edition.

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MooDFOOD Project Update - January 2018

In July 2015, the first participants were introduced to the MoodFOOD study in Germany. Since then, almost 6000 persons have been screened to determine whether they were appropriate candidates to participate in the study. This resulted in 1025 people from four participating countries being included: Germany (277), United Kingdom (254), Spain (252) and The Netherlands (242).

Some baseline characteristics: most participants were female (75%) and Caucasian (95%). Their average age of was 46. Approximately one out of three participants had a history of depression, though this percentage differed among the four countries (NB this may have been caused by differences in the recruitment process). The average body mass index (BMI) of all participants, calculated as body weight in kilograms divided by height in m², was 31 kg/m². For reference, the threshold BMI for obesity is 30.

MooDFOOD Project Update	1-2
MooDFOOD at IUNS 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina	2
MooDFOOD at ISNPR	2-3
Meet MooDFOOD Consortium Partner Liisa Lähteenmäki	3
MooDFOOD – Newsflash	3-4

This data is needed to answer the project's key question i.e.

'Will a lifestyle and behavioural coaching programme and/or the daily use of multivitamin and mineral supplements for a period of one year improve mood and lower the risk of experiencing an episode of depression?'

In October 2017, the final participant had his/her last MoodFOOD measurement.

During the past 27 months, the research team has received tremendous interest and cooperation from those that have participated in this important study. In addition, the research teams within all

four participating countries worked diligently and efficiently — making regular appointments with the volunteers, providing participants with pill containers, supervising therapy sessions, and collecting all the data required for our research.

And of course, everyone is anxiously awaiting the project results for the answer to this question.

When presenting the design of the MoodFOOD study at national and international meetings, scientific colleagues and health professionals are extremely interested and the first question often received, is: ***'When will the results of this trial become available?'*** The MoodFOOD project team is currently working hard to get all the datasets ready for the upcoming statistical analyses and the answer to the key research question is expected in the short term.

As a reader of this newsletter you will be among the first to be informed when the results become available.

MoodFOOD at IUNS 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Laura Winkens, part of the MoodFOOD Consortium, presented the project at the IUNS symposium, the 21st International Congress of Nutrition.

The theme of the meeting was ***"From sciences to nutritional security"***.

Dr. Winkens was interviewed by a Brazilian journalist and a summary of this interview can be found below.

The so-called "mindful eating" would help you watch what you eat.

There is lots of talk recently about mindfulness, a meditative practice to help people deal with everyday situations. This concept is also used in relation to food, i.e. ***'eating with conscience'***, and according to research

released at IUNS 2017, this can reduce symptoms of depressions.

According to studies conducted by the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, instead of eating automatically and without thinking, identifying appetite and focusing on the act of eating with intention could be an important ally in combating depression.

Dr. Winkens explained that she makes use of the 'Mindful Eating Behaviour' scale, a specific questionnaire which investigates behaviours related to eating with mindfulness.

This instrument is composed of four domains:

- **focused eating:** this refers to perceiving the aromas and flavours of food during a meal;
- **suggestions of appetite and satiety:** this refers to trusting and listening to the signals the body sends about whether it is hungry or not;
- **eating with awareness:** this involves avoiding eating automatically but instead paying attention to what is ingested;
- **eating without distractions:** this refers to eating meals sitting at the table rather than doing other things at the same time, e.g. watching TV or using a mobile phone

Three of these domains show an association with **a decrease in the symptoms of depression, i.e. eating concentration, eating consciously and eating without distraction**

Dr. Winkens is now dedicated to understanding the mechanisms that generate this association, which may also possibly be related to the amount of food consumed. This is because those who 'eat with focus' or 'eat without distraction' consume fewer calories.

That is where the explanation for the change in depressive symptoms may be.

We still do not know if mindful eating leads to better food choices, or to eating less, and therefore with losing weight, and this all ends up reflecting on depression.

There are a number of factors that can influence the process. Depression is now one of the most prevalent and burdensome disorders worldwide.

Mindful eating in a few steps

- Be aware of how you eat, pay attention to the food on the plate
- Detect the thoughts you have in relation to food
- Experience the foods fully, connecting with the sensations, emotions and thoughts that they provoke
- Attend to the signs of hunger and satiety that the body sends out
- Accept yourself, your body and the way you relate to food
- Observe the situations and emotions that drive the decision to eat or not to eat

MoodFOOD at ISNPR



ISNPR 2017

Nutrition for mental and brain health

MoodFOOD was delighted to be presenting the project at the first International Society of Nutritional Psychiatry Research this summer.

This meeting addressed the broad spectrum of research from the sub-cellular to translation and implementation science and will cater for multidisciplinary interests.

An important element of the ISNPR conference consisted of workshops which offered training from skilled and highly experienced psychiatrists and dietitians. **These focused on the**

practical aspects of nutrition and clinical care for those with mental disorders. For more information: click [here](#)

Meet MoodFOOD Consortium Partner Liisa Lähteenmäki

Liisa Lähteenmäki is Professor in Consumer Behaviour and Food Choice at the MAPP Centre, Aarhus University in Denmark. Her background is in Human Nutrition and Psychology with a special interest in the role of health, novelty, and sustainability in food-related behaviours, widening the perspective from choices to food provisioning practices and routines, including studies on factors explaining food waste in households.



A short interview with Liisa

Liisa, can you please tell us about the scientific approach you are taking to understand the relationship of food-related behaviour with depression?

We are interested in how individuals' food-related practices are related to depressive symptoms and the risk of depression. Several studies have found a link between depression and snacking or skipping meals such as not having breakfast. These food-related practices result in complex networks where options and choices around food purchases, food preparation practices and meal patterns are woven to daily and weekly routines that often define what we eat and when.

In the past, most studies have been interested in nutritional composition of diet or food intake per se without considering them as results of these various daily practice. We aim to study

how different practices contribute to diet quality and thereby to the link between diet and depression.

At Aarhus University we are mainly interested in these food-related practices and at the Vrije University of Amsterdam the primary focus is on psychological factors e.g. the individual tendency to eat when having negative feelings or whether mindfulness has an impact on depression and depressive symptoms.

One of the key components of the project is the web-based intervention study your team is conducting. Can you tell us about how this was developed and implemented? And what is the significance for the project?

Using a web-based intervention, we are studying how people experience different kinds of suggested behaviour changes. Participants are offered advice on either changing their food choices, meal patterns, food provisioning practices, or training in mindful eating. Most nutrition interventions target food choices, but our interest is in whether targeting the behaviours around eating would be easier to make. The assumption is that making changes in shopping routines or meal patterns will also result changes in food intake without a need to think about single foods as good or bad choices.

In our interventions we provide participants with advice, tips to follow and exercises to promote behaviour change. Our interventions are short term and we are mainly interested in the perceived ease of making changes in behaviour and whether the perceived ease is related to depressive symptoms. We hope that to find out if this type of on-line intervention increases individuals' confidence in making changes in their food-related behaviour. We hope that our research results will widen our perspective in how to

approach the provision of food and health-related advice to individuals and find out how targeting food-related behaviours can contribute to our mental well-being.

MoodFOOD-News flash

Scientific publications

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the first results of the MoodFOOD trials and studies would be made available by the end of 2017. And yes, you can read a few summaries of the published articles here below.

The associations of mindful eating domains with depressive symptoms and depression in 3 European countries

Winkens, L. H. H., van Strien, T., Brouwer, I. A., Penninx, B. W. J. H., Visser, M., & Lähteenmäki, L. (2018)

Nutrition is likely to influence the development of depression, but other factors like obesity, the social environment and practices and routines around eating might be involved as well. Mindful eating, which is eating with awareness and attention, might be one of the food-related behaviour factors that is associated with depression.

This study was the first to investigate associations of mindful eating with depressive symptoms and depression. Data from 1522 people from Denmark, 1512 people from Spain and 1439 people from the Netherlands was used. Four mindful eating domains were measured with the Mindful Eating Behaviour Scale (MEBS; Winkens et al., under revision). Depressive symptoms were measured with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). Someone was classified as having depression when they scored above the clinically relevant cut-off score on the CES-D, and/or used antidepressants, and/or received psychological treatment.

In conclusion: this study suggests that mindful eating plays a role in mental well-being by consistently showing associations between three mindful eating domains and depression in samples from three European countries. Future studies should investigate possible mechanisms that might explain these associations.

Eating styles in major depressive disorder: Results from a large-scale study

Nadine Paans

People suffering from depression have been found to have problems with respect to dietary patterns as well as with eating styles. Examples of unhealthy eating styles are emotional eating, external eating and restrained eating.

Emotional eating relates to eating in response to negative emotions, external eating to eating in response to external cues, and restrained eating is eating too much after a period of strictly regulating eating. Some earlier studies found that

people with strong depressive symptoms show more unhealthy eating styles. While feeling depressed is usually associated with loss of appetite and subsequent weight loss, a depression subtype exists which is characterised by the atypical features of increased appetite and subsequent weight gain. It is not known whether all depression subtypes are associated to more unhealthy eating styles or whether differences exist between the different subtypes. It is also not known whether people with a formal depressive disorder also have more unhealthy eating styles. Therefore, this study examined whether a formal diagnosis of depression is associated with unhealthy eating styles, and which specific depression characteristics are associated with emotional, external and restrained eating. Data of a large study, conducted in the Netherlands - the Netherlands Study of Depression and Anxiety - was used. For all participants (aged between 18-65) the level of depression and eating styles were determined (by means of an interview and self-reporting questionnaires).

The results of this study indicate that depression should not only be used as

one homogeneous variable when investigating eating behavior, as associations between depression and eating styles are not similar across the full spectrum of depressive disorders.

Prevention and treatment programs for depression should address disordered eating specifically in those with atypical depressive symptoms. This could prevent or minimize the subsequent negative health consequences like unhealthy dietary patterns and weight gain, thereby supporting breaking through this unhealthy vicious circle.

For an overview of all scientific MoodFOOD publications please click [here](#)

Previous GAMIAN-Europe newsletters on MoodFOOD

You can find them [here](#)

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