

6.K. Oral presentations: Food, nutrition and diet

Psychological distress from the COVID-19 confinement is associated with unhealthy dietary changes

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Background:

The confinement due to COVID-19 pandemic had adverse effects on mental health, but the relation between psychological distress resulting from lockdown measures and dietary habits needs to be elucidated.

Methods:

We analysed 2,741 subjects (mean age 58.1 ± 15.3 y) pooled from 2 retrospective Italian cohorts recruited from May to September 2020: 1) The Moli-LOCK cohort consists of 1,401 adults, a portion of the larger Moli-sani Study ($n = 24,325$) who were administered a telephone-based questionnaire to assess lifestyles and psychological factors during confinement; 2) the ALT RISCOVID-19 is a web-based survey of 1,340 individuals distributed throughout Italy who self-responded to the same questionnaire by using Google[®] forms. Psychological distress was measured by assessments of depression (PHQ-9), anxiety (GAD-7), stress (PSS-4), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Diet quality was assessed either as changes in consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPF) or adherence to Mediterranean diet (MD).

Results:

In a multivariable regression analysis controlled for major sociodemographic factors, depression ($\beta = -0.06$, 95%CI -0.10, -0.01), anxiety ($\beta = -0.05$, -0.09, -0.004) and PTSD ($\beta = -0.04$, -0.08, -0.002) were inversely associated with MD and directly with UPF ($\beta = 0.13$, 0.09, 0.18; $\beta = 0.12$, 0.08, 0.16 and $\beta = 0.10$, 0.06, 0.13, respectively); stress was associated with UPF ($\beta = 0.06$, 0.02, 0.10) but not with MD ($\beta = -0.03$, -0.08, 0.01).

Conclusions:

Psychological distress resulting from confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic is directly associated with unhealthy dietary modifications in a sample of the Italian population. In view of possible future restrictive measures, particular attention should be paid to public health actions promoting psychological support to more vulnerable groups.

Key messages:

- Psychological distress resulting from confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic is directly associated with unhealthy dietary modifications.
- Particular attention should be paid to public health actions promoting psychological support to more vulnerable groups also in view of future restrictive measures to contain the pandemic spread.