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To what extent can the effects of increasing healthier food availability on food selection be explained by individual food preferences? A follow-up pilot study

Submission date
08/04/2020

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
14/04/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
12/06/2023

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Increasing the availability of healthier or more plant-based foods increases their selection. One possible mechanism that might underlie these effects is individuals' prior preferences, whereby selections reflect individuals' most-preferred option from the available range. The first exploration – to the researchers' knowledge – of the role of prior preferences as a possible mechanism underlying the effects of manipulating the relative availability of healthier and less healthy options suggested that a large majority of selections reflect the most-preferred option. However, only small differences were observed in preferences by option healthiness in this initial study. This study aims to further explore role of preferences by identifying high vs. low preference options for use in an extension of the previous study, as well as exploring the extent to which preferences vary depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

Who can participate?
Adults over the age of 18 with no dietary restrictions

What does the study involve?
The study will be conducted online. Participants will all see meat-based less-healthy meal options, but will be randomly assigned to also see images of either meat-based healthier meal options or vegetarian healthier meal options. The study will establish each participant's baseline relative preferences between all the food options they have been assigned to in the study. To do so, participants are asked to choose which option they would prefer to eat right now from pairs of food options. These pairs represent every possible pairing of food options assigned in the study. This allows each food option to subsequently be ranked in terms of each participant's preferences. The data from the study will be used to identify main meal options that represent high vs. low preference options for use in a subsequent extension study, and to examine the extent to which preferences are altered depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants will be paid the equivalent of UK minimum wage for participating in the study.
There are no known risks of participating.

Where is the study run from?
Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
February 2020 to July 2020

Who is funding the study?
Wellcome Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Rachel Pechey
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(updated 07/01/2021, previously: rachel.pechey@medschl.cam.ac.uk)

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
Pre.2020.030

Study information

Scientific Title

Increasing the relative availability of healthier vs. less healthy food: Can impact be explained in terms of prior preferences? A follow-up pilot study

Study objectives
Vegetarian options are less likely to be selected than comparable meat-based options.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 30/03/2020, Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee (School of the Biological Sciences, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1RX, UK; +44 (0)1223 766894; Cheryl.torbett@admin.cam.ac.uk), ref: Pre.2020.030

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-centre two-group between-subjects design

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Unhealthy diet

Interventions
The study will be conducted online. Participants will all see meat-based less-healthy meal options, but will be randomly assigned to also see images of either meat-based healthier meal options or vegetarian healthier meal options. The study will establish each participant's baseline relative preferences between all the food options they have been assigned to in the study. To do so, participants are asked to choose which option they would prefer to eat right now from pairs of food options. These pairs represent every possible pairing of food options assigned in the study. This allows each food option to subsequently be ranked in terms of each participant's preferences. The data from the study will be used to (1) identify main meal options that represent high vs. low preference options for use in a subsequent extension study, and (2) to examine the extent to which preferences are altered depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
The ranking score calculated for each meal option following completion of the online survey (single timepoint)

Key secondary outcome(s)
There are no secondary outcome measures

Completion date

31/07/2020

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Adults aged over 18 years
2. Participants currently residing within the UK

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
540

Key exclusion criteria
Dietary restrictions

Date of first enrolment
15/04/2020

Date of final enrolment
30/04/2020

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Behaviour and Health Research Unit
University of Cambridge
Institute of Public Health
University Forvie Site
Robinson Way

Cambridge
United Kingdom
CB2 0SR

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Cambridge

ROR
https://ror.org/013meh722

Funder(s)

Funder type
Research organisation

Funder Name
Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
International organizations

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data-sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?

Results article	26/01/2021	12/06/2023	Yes	No