Workshop.

Regional food habits as predictor of obesity/malnutrition development.

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Dietary factors play a main role in the so-called common non-communicable disorders, i.e. overweight, diabetes, cardiovascular and renal disease, fatty liver, COPD and cancer, and their combination. In an ageing society, together these disorders account for a major burden of disease. Lifestyle intervention is recommended as the major preventive measure, but sustained lifestyle changes are notoriously difficult to achieve. Recent insights in lifestyle management highlight two main factors, namely: first, the importance of dietary patterns rather than single nutrients, and second, the importance of considering contextual factors (i.e.: factors governing daily life) in dietary and lifestyle counseling in order to be successful. In data from the Lifelines cohort we identified marked regional differences in dietary preferences in the Northern Netherlands, robust after adjustment for age and socio-economic status, and hence indicating distinct regional cultural differences in food habits. The regional food patterns were linked to morbidity pattern. We recommend that regional food preferences should be recognized and accounted for in dietary counseling, as a strategy to improve adoption and efficacy of dietary management.