

Parklife Café – Health Information Session: "How salt, sugar, fats affect the cardiovascular system/risks"

Background and development of the session

On the 6 June 2024, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Imperial Patient Experience Research Centre (PERC) were invited to undertake a health awareness session held at the ParkLife Café in Harrow, on "How salt, sugar, fats affect the cardiovascular system/risks."

PERC identified Dr Aygul Dagbasi who is a Registered Dietitian and Postdoctoral researcher at Imperial College as a speaker.

Prior to the session we held a briefing call to introduce Dr Dagbasi to community representatives to discuss the content of the talk and to get insight into any specific community interests. Draft slides were provided in advance to PERC and some amendments made and feedback forms prepared which included questions about Dr Dagbasi's research about which she was also going to explain during the talk.

Format of the session:

- 7:00pm Refreshments
- 7:20pm Presentation on "How salt, sugar, fats affect the cardiovascular system/risks" and Dr Dagbasi's research
- 8:30pm Q&A and Discussion
- 8:30pm Close

Aims of the session:

- Sharing health literacy information about "How salt, sugar, fats affect the cardiovascular system/risks" with underserved communities who may potentially benefit from it.
- Increasing awareness about research and obtaining feedback from the community about a research project

The session was hybrid which meant that some people were in the room and others joined on Zoom, with a PowerPoint presentation used for visual aids and to get key information across.

Attendees

The session was disseminated on the Parklife Café website and across their community networks (see more in **Appendix A**).

There were 19 attendees in person and approximately 12 attendees on Zoom. Those who attended in person were asked to provide their demographic details (voluntarily) on the session feedback form.

Agenda of the session:

During the session, the following topics were covered:

- Introduction to Dr Dagbasi
- Cardiovascular disease risks
- Types of fats: saturated, unsaturated and trans fats
- Omega 3 foods: oily fish, flaxseeds, walnuts, soybeans
- Eggs: Do they increase cholesterol ?
- Salt and salt alternatives
- Sugar and sweeteners (safe but sweeter than sugar)
- Fibre
- Tips for a heart healthy diet
- Dr Dagbasi's proposed research project on including plant proteins and fibres in food to make people feel fuller for longer to decrease weight gain.

Comments shared about what attendees wanted to learn from the session:

- One attendee's father suffers from low sodium – how do you manage that?
- How much salt are you allowed per day? Is Himalayan salt any better ?
- If the government wants us to eat less salt, sugar, fat why aren't they making it easier/cheaper to do so
- Are sugar/fat/salt addictive?

Questions asked during the session:

- Is the coarseness of salt relevant?
 - No
- Is rock salt ok?
 - No
- Is adding salt to food whilst cooking better than after its cooked?
 - No
- Is putting jaggery/agave syrup/date syrup better than sugar?
 - No
- Is Coke Zero OK?
 - Drink sparingly
- Does the advice change with age?
 - It changes with medical conditions and age
- Is there a study linking sugar and hormone imbalance as when have menopause, I crave sugar

- Yes menopause is associated with increased appetite and sugar cravings
- When men and women eat the same food does it affect them differently?
 - Yes but also between 2 women and 2 men, we see differences.
- Is sunflower oil OK to cook with?
 - Yes
- What if I cook oil more than once?
 - Trans fats start to form therefore should be avoided where possible

Comments made during the session:

- There should be information about nutrition and meal preparation for children
- The council should regulate where shops like chicken shops are situated in light of schools

Comments shared about Dr Dagbasi's research project:

- Could you get the plant protein from shops and add it to your own food so you have control?
- Processed foods should be made healthier.
- How will Imperial get the food industry to do this?
- Does the plant protein taste of anything?
- Could we sprinkle it on top of food as a healthy topper?
- Could this have implications for eating disorders - what if someone put a month's worth on their food at once so you trick your body into thinking you are full?

Session feedback

At the end of the session, we shared a printed feedback form with all the attendees to explore the experience of the attendees, including what worked well, what could be improved and questions asking for feedback on Dr Dagbasi's research project. We received 10 responses. Please see the results of the feedback forms in **Appendix B**:

Appendix A: Demographics of attendees (non-mandatory to provide):

Taken from the feedback forms:

| Characteristics | n |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Age groups (in years) | |
| 25 or under | 0 |
| 26 – 35 | 0 |
| 36 – 45 | 0 |
| 46 – 55 | 2 |
| 56 – 65 | 3 |
| 66 – 75 | 4 |
| 76 – 85 | 0 |
| 86+ | 0 |
| Prefer not to say | 1 |

Ethnic group (self-reported)

| Characteristics | n |
|------------------------|----------|
| Hindu | 1 |
| Asian | 2 |
| Asian/Indian | 1 |
| Nepalese | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 1 |

Appendix B: Responses to Feedback Form Questions

| Q1. Overall, how would you rate the session? | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| No response | Very bad | Bad | Average | Good | Excellent |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Q2. Please rate the following statements: | | | | | |
| a) I feel more knowledgeable about how diet affects cardiovascular diseases | | | | | |
| No response | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| *“I think I knew most of the points” | | | | | |
| b) I feel more confident about eating healthy | | | | | |
| No response | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Q3. Do you think the information presented at today’s session will help you, or your family/friends? | | | | | |
| Yes | | No | Not sure | | |
| 10 | | 0 | 0 | | |
| Q4. What did you like most about the session? | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Different fats was explained. Salts and sugar was explained” • Interactive and Dr Aygul answered all questions • Friendly • Protein powder - waiting for it to be OK • Everything • Alternative to salt and sugar should be taking moderately like rock salt, jaggery, honey, etc • More education about eating and drinking • Everything • How much to eat | | | | | |
| Q5. What could be done better next time? | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoot video if possible • Screen text larger for the back of the room • More diet food? • Practical • School education and more • All great very impressed • Read labels – how to decide which packet of which company is best for our health | | | | | |
| Q6. Would you eat foods with added natural ingredients eg. plant fibres and protein that would make you feel fuller, to help with weight management? | | | | | |
| Yes | No | Maybe | No response | | |
| 8 | 1 | 2 | 0 | | |

Q7. Would you eat foods that are grown to naturally contain ingredients e.g. plant fibres and proteins that make you feel fuller, to help with weight management?

| Yes | No | Maybe | No response |
|-----|----|-------|-------------|
| 8 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

Q8. Please add any thoughts/comments or suggestions about the proposed research project below:

- Very useful session. Would like to join in the future as well. Will share with my family
- Advertise in doctor surgery and sports etc for group talks
- Yes will sprinkle
- Happy to take part in research