Supporting Ethnographical Nutrition for Older People with Depression

Introduction

One of the most important, yet under researched, factors is the role of diet to address depression in elderly. Recommendations are made to follow traditional healthy diet, to reduce the risk of depression. However, dietary practices are governed by a mix of ethnographic aspects like social, cultural, environmental, economic and psychological factors. These aspects need to be captured into existing knowledge system, as they heavily influence dietary pattern, dietary diversity and dietary quality.

This work attempts to use semantic technologies to capture ethnographic information of older adults and provide appropriate dietary recommendations. We will create and implement a specialized ontological paradigm to identify, define and relate nutrition and diet of depressed elderly adults, with several confounding variables that impact dietary choices and food habits.

Background

Depression is one of the prevalent chronic disease in aging adults, as nearly half of the UK population (7.7 million) aged 55+ have experienced depression (NHS, England, 2017), (Copeland et al., 1999). It is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease (Depression, WHO, 2018). Research findings have identified different measures to control depression such as leisure activities (Lee et al., 2018), exercises (Pollock et al., 2001), medications (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychiatrie, 2010) and web-based treatments (Buntrock et al., 2017). One of the most important, yet under researched, factors is the role of diet to address depression. A healthy diet and appropriate nutrition can make a significant improvement within the lives of people with depression

(Sanchez-Villegas and Martínez-González, 2013). Nutritionists and Medical Doctors, will prescribe a standard intake of fruit, vegetables, fish, olive oil to fight depression. Conversely, processed food, refined grains, sweets, high-fat dairy products, need to be avoided, are potential triggers to high risk of depression (Sanchez-Villegas et al., 2012; 2011). However, diet and food preferences differ significantly as there are several ethnographic factors affecting a population and influencing their food choices (Leung and Stanner, 2011), (Asp, 1999), (Onley, 1989). These factors might be cultural (Mead, 1943), (Kittler & Sucher,1989); socio-economic (Kurt Lewin,1943*), (Lowenberg et al.,1968); religious (Heiman et al., 2017); psychological (Lyman, 2012) or political (Nestle, 2007).

Objective

These ethnographic aspects need to be taken into consideration while recommending healthy diet for aging generation suffering from chronic disease like depression. Although there is a high inference and identity of dietary needs playing a large part in managing depression, literature to date, does not address the cultural, socioeconomic, religious, psychological and political needs in terms of how they affect decisions on food selection for aging adults with depression. Understanding chronically ill patients' food habits require accurate in depth analysis and a concrete categorisation of these confounding variables. There is a need to classify these factors and make selections based on the sociocultural background using an appropriate system.

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