YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT:
Improving diet management skills for people with Severe Mental Illness – early findings

NHS South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

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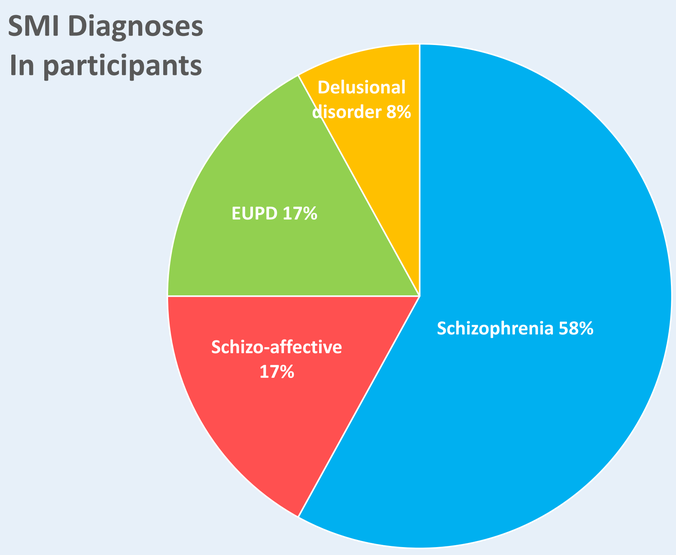
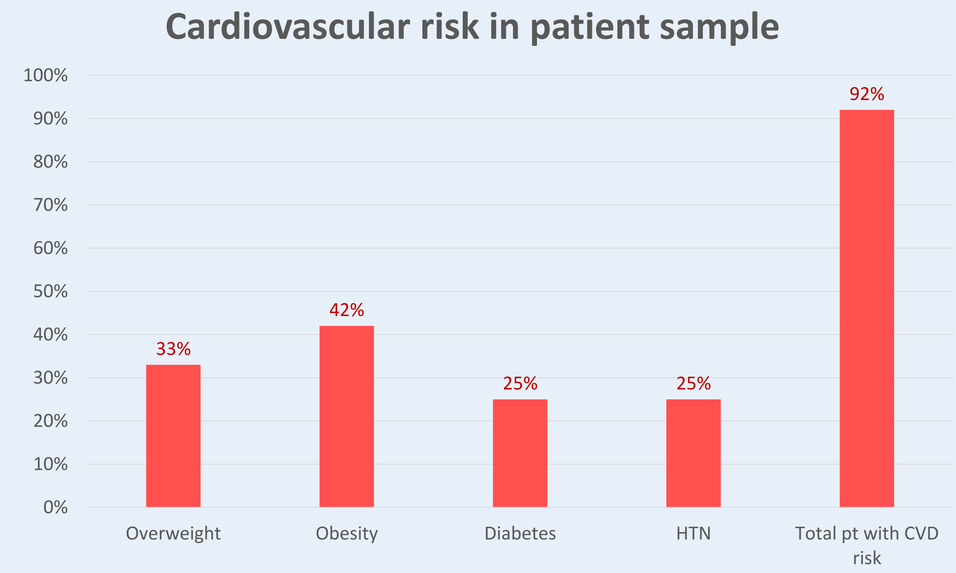
BACKGROUND & AIMS

- Patients with long term mental illness often have multiple medical co-morbidities including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- Evidence shows that due to the gut-brain connection; gut health (including gut microbiome) is essential to MENTAL wellbeing
- There is an increasing interest in patients on how to support their mental health alongside medication
- The aims of this project is to increase awareness, confidence, autonomy and practical skills in making healthy food choices and providing patients with a co-produced selection of healthy recipes to take with them into the community.

METHODS

- 12 patients with SMI on inpatient rehabilitation unit showed interest in participating in healthy eating workshops
- 3 workshops delivered once weekly over 3 weeks in groups of 6 participants. Workshop content as described in flow chart below
- Pre-workshop survey to ascertain confidence and motivational scales as well as current function
- Currently piloting first 3 workshops on the ward with 1st group of 6 patients. If successful will offer repeat for further 6 patients
- Additional surveys to be collected after workshop 3 to compare with baseline, measures including confidence and motivation levels to maintain healthy diet, skills in interpreting food labels and making healthy food choices and having readily available, simple recipes to use to maintain healthy eating habits long-term





WORKSHOP 1
Interactive teaching session:
- influence of diet on the brain
- gut-brain connection
- leaky gut
- gut microbiome health

Practical session: Preparing chickpea salad and tasting

WORKSHOP 2
Interactive teaching session:
- Interpreting food labels
- Healthy alternatives to common foods/snacks + tasting

Practical session: Preparing Greek salad and tasting

WORKSHOP 3:
Co-production of recipe book
- Each patient brings their favourite recipe(s) and we make healthy adaptations
- Recipe book prepared and given to patients to keep

Practical session: Preparing loaded French omelette

INITIAL RESULTS

From the pre-survey workshop for the first 6 patients:
- 80% felt that what you ate was ‘absolutely’ important for their mental health.
- 60% felt moderately confident in making healthy food choices (5-8/10)
- 60% felt moderately motivated to maintain a healthy diet (5-8/10)
- 40% ‘partly’ and 40% ‘mostly’ felt they had a selection of healthy recipes they could trust
- We are still in the process of carrying out workshops and collating finalised data for analysis and outcome of the project.

CONCLUSIONS

- This is a high-risk population for cardiovascular disease
- Eating healthily to boost brain health is important to patients
- We predict this series of workshops will increase patient confidence and motivation levels in being able to make healthy food choices
- We predict improvement of level of skill in food label interpretation and making practical healthy food choices
- We predict the co-produced recipe book will provide patients with simple, reliably healthy recipes to use currently and in the community
- This will lead to long-term healthy food habits and choices which will promote sustaining mental health.
- Nutritional needs and skills are a vital part of rehabilitation and should be offered as standard on all units.