Dietary patterns are associated with the prevalence of alexithymia

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Objective: Recent evidence supports the association between healthy dietary patterns and a reduced risk of depression. Nevertheless, no previous studies have been published on the association between dietary patterns and alexithymia, a personality feature closely linked to depression. Objective: To 1) examine the associations between dietary patterns and alexithymic features and 2) investigate whether these possible associations are explained by depressive symptoms in a Finnish general population aged 25–65 years.

Methods: The study population was a part of the longitudinal population-based Kuopio Depression Study (KUDEP) conducted in central-eastern Finland (n = 1752). Alexithymic features were assessed using the 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale and depressive symptoms with the self-administered Beck Depression Inventory. Dietary data were collected using a food frequency questionnaire and dietary patterns from 22 predefined food groups were extracted by factor analysis.

Results: Altogether, 175 of the study subjects (10%) were alexithymic. Three dietary patterns were identified: “prudent”, “Western” and “traditional”. Lower scores for a prudent dietary pattern and higher scores for an unhealthy Western dietary pattern were associated with an increased likelihood of belonging to the alexithymic group among depressed subjects. Only the traditional dietary pattern was associated with an increased likelihood of belonging to the alexithymic group among the non-depressed subjects.

Limitations: The cross-sectional study setting did not allow any causal conclusions on the relationships between alexithymia, depression and dietary patterns.

Conclusions: General population subjects with alexithymic features have more unhealthy dietary patterns than non-alexithymic subjects. In addition, the concurrent depressive symptoms moderate this association.
Binge Eating and Weaker Cognitive Restraint are associated with Subthreshold Depression in Overweight and Obese Adults

Objectives
Depression and obesity constitute major public health problems. Moreover, major depressive disorder has been linked to obesity, but less is known about the significance of subthreshold depression with respect to obesity and eating behaviour. Therefore, the goals of this study were to 1) investigate the prevalence of subthreshold depression and 2) examine the eating behaviours associated with it.

Methods
This is a baseline phase report of the CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy)-Based Weight Loss Program (FinCognObe). The study participants (n=54, 34 women, mean age: 50.4 years) consisted of overweight or obese adults (BMI over 30 kg/m²) who were recruited through a newspaper ad. The participants filled out a study questionnaire consisting of personal data and health related questions as well as questionnaires to examine depression (BDI), binge eating (BES) and eating behaviour (TFEQ R-18). Cross-sectional group comparisons (t-tests) and logistic regression analyses were used in the data analyses.

Results
Subthreshold (BDI>10) depression was very common in this study sample, at a prevalence of 37% (women: 43%, men: 23%). Those with depressive symptoms had weaker cognitive restraint and more frequent binge eating. In the logistic regression analyses, weaker cognitive restraint emerged as an independent risk factor for subthreshold depression.

Conclusions
Depressive symptoms must be recognized in weight-loss efforts and interventions regarding eating behaviour. For example, binge eating and weakened cognitive restraint may be indicative of depressive symptoms. Therefore, the systematic screening of depressive symptoms among obese patient populations (e.g. in dietitian and GP practices) is called for.
Post-traumatic growth of adolescents and young adults following the death of a parent

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**Abstract:**

**Object**

Loss of a parent is a threat to well-being among young people but the struggle coping with the bereavement may also contribute to positive changes. We explored post-traumatic growth (PTG) among young people following the death of a parent due to cancer.

**Method**

Young people (16-28 yrs) who lost a parent in the Stockholm area, Sweden, and who participated in a support group with professional group leaders answered questionnaires, assessing the different aspects of psychosocial issues, on three occasions: before attending the group (I), directly after (II), and six months later (III). We explored post-traumatic growth, using PTGI at occasion II and III, i.e. after one year in bereavement. In this presentation, we present results for the first 29 participants having completed all measurements.

**Result**

Three of the five dimensions of PTG indicated growth (m > 2.0) at both occasions; relating to others, personal strength and appreciation of life. A majority of the adolescents/young adults were developing personal strength (69%) and had developed a greater appreciation of life as a result of the bereavement crisis (79%) already at closure of the group. Awareness of the impending death was associated to less PTG regarding appreciation of life.

**Conclusion**

The concept of PTG is relevant to parental loss in young adulthood and should be acknowledge when designing support.
Mental health promotion by school nurses – still a question of insufficient resources?

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Abstract:
Objectives
Promoting health of pupils is an important part of school nurse’s work. However, they may lack the time or competencies for mental health promotion. This study investigated the current views, resources and training needs of school nurses in terms of promoting mental wellbeing of pupils in North Karelia, Finland and in the City of Petrozavodsk, Republic of Karelia, Russia. The term ‘school nurse’ refers here also to Russian feldshers and general nurses working for school healthcare.

Methods
Data were collected in Spring 2014 using a questionnaire. In total 63 school nurses participated (in North Karelia n=30, response rate 57 % and in Petrozavodsk n=33, response rate 97%). Descriptive statistics were used in analysis.

Results
Mental health problems were seen as threats to wellbeing of primary school-aged children by 17 % of Finnish and 42 % of Russian respondents. Even bigger percentages (47 % and 55 %, respectively) were worried about mental health of secondary school-aged pupils. Mental health topics (self-esteem, worries, bullying, social networks and relationships) were discussed with pupils more often by Finnish than by Russian respondents, while importance of sleep, rest and physical exercise, and daily rhythm were covered often in both countries. Russian respondents had more pupils in their responsibility than their Finnish counterparts, but over half of both groups considered their possibilities at work as relatively good. Working time was mainly spent on regular health check-ups and paperwork in both areas. The expressed training needs included helping pupils with multiple problems, mental health problems of children and adolescents, and early intervention.

Conclusion
Inadequate skills and lack of time and other resources may decrease the school nurses’ possibilities to actively promote mental health of pupils, despite they perceive mental problems as threats to pupils’ wellbeing. More time resources and further education are needed in this field.
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Poster session 1: theme 6: presentation 5
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Teachers’ competencies to support children with neuropsychiatric disorders in school context

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Abstract:

Objectives
Many Finnish municipalities struggle with difficult economic situation and scarce resources. Limited availability of schools assistants may lead to situations, where children with neuropsychiatric disorders are denied the support they would need for coping with learning and life in general. Accumulation of unattended problems leads easily to more severe conditions, which require referral to specialist child psychiatric care for research, diagnosis and treatment, and cause substantial expenses to the home municipality of the child. However, it is widely agreed that health promotion and prevention of diseases is more cost-efficient than treatment.

In this study we want to explore the ways to promote the mental health of children with neuropsychiatric disorders and to preventively support them in school. The study questions are:

- What kind of competencies do teachers have to support pupils with childhood neuropsychiatric disorders in school context?
- What kind of new skills, capabilities, support or further training would teachers need?

Methods
Data will be collected in Spring 2016 from the school teachers in the region Pohjois-Savo, Finland, using an electronic questionnaire. The study will be a part of “eHealth Services for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (eCAP)” project funded by the NPA 2014-2020 programme.

Expected results
The results of the survey will be reported in the NHPRC in June. We expect to find ways to support children suffering from neuropsychiatric conditions with relatively small resource input, by increasing teachers’ competencies to work with these children in their developmental environments.

Conclusions
School teachers play a key role in detecting and reacting to pupils’ needs for special support. Therefore, teachers need appropriate knowledge about mental health of children and the courage to intervene when necessary. Support by multi-professional team is indispensable for preventing problems from escalating to the level when referring to the secondary healthcare is unavoidable.