Body shape satisfaction, and diet and exercise practices of nutrition and dietetics and occupational therapy students: initial cross-sectional results from a longitudinal study

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Background

• Body shape concern – a potentially significant physiological and psychological health issue\(^1,^2\)
  ➔ maladaptive eating
  ➔ extreme weight management methods
  ➔ excessive exercise

• Prevalence of body shape concern and dissatisfaction is high in young individuals\(^3\)
  • Up to 90%

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Methods

Study Sample

• All students enrolled in Nutrition and Dietetics (ND) and Occupational Therapy (OT) disciplines

Data Collection Tools

• A demographic questionnaire
• The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ8-D)
• The Dietary Questionnaire for Epidemiological Studies (Cancer Council of Victoria)*
• The International Physical Activity Questionnaire

*The authors thank Professor Graham Giles of the Cancer Epidemiology Centre of the Cancer Council Victoria, for permission to use the Dietary Questionnaire for Epidemiological Studies (Version 2), Melbourne: The Cancer Council Victoria, 1996
Results

• n=147 students (87% female)

• Mean age 27 years (range 17-51)

• Mean Body Mass Index (BMI):
  ○ Males: 24.7 ± 2.5 kg/m²
  ○ Females: 22.6 ± 3.9 kg/m²

  Perceived ideal: 24.8 ± 2.7 kg/m², p < .05

Perceived ideal: 20.9 ± 2.0 kg/m², p < .05
Results: Body Shape Concern

- Significantly greater in females than males
  (scores $23.8 \pm 9.5$ compared to $14.3 \pm 4.5$, $p < .05$)

Percent of male and female participants according to categories of concern:

- No concern with shape
- Mild concern with shape
- Moderate concern with shape
- Marked concern with shape

Males: 72% (No concern), 28% (Mild concern)
Females: 35% (No concern), 21% (Mild concern), 18% (Marked concern), 26% (Moderate concern)
Results: Daily Energy Intake

Significantly greater in males (9.5 ± 4.3MJ compared to 5.8 ± 2.1MJ), $p < .05$.

52% below estimated minimal needs

- Males: 37%
- ND Females: 56%
- OT Females: 51%
Results: Physical Activity

No significant differences in overall MET scores or MET categories between gender or enrolment degree.
Results: Relationships btw Measures

- **Body shape concern and BMI:**
  - Males: no significant correlation
  - Females: a medium, positive correlation, $r_s = .45$

- **Body shape concern and energy intake:**
  - Males: no significant correlation
  - Females: a small, negative correlation with est. minimal needs/estimated intake, $r_s = -.18$

- **Body shape concern and physical activity:**
  - No significant correlation in both genders
Conclusion and Future Focus

Summary:
• Relatively high body shape concern (females)
• Energy intake below the estimated minimal needs
• Relatively high physical activity

Future Focus:
• Eating attitudes and behaviours
• Detailed dietary intake
• Longitudinal changes