

INVITED EDITORIAL

IS DIETING A SOLUTION DURING PANDEMIC FOR WEIGHT CONTROL?

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ABSTRACT

Unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic paralysed the entire world and its normal function. Although governmental restrictions might help the spreading rate of infection throughout the lockdown, health related issues such as lack of physical activity and malnutrition are having a tremendous negative impact in the general population. COVID-19 and its effects on the lifestyle of population at the moment is considered as a "hot topic" and different affected areas are being highly investigated. Despite scientific recommendations on PA and healthy eating, we were somehow forced to stop engaging in physical activity, affecting and making more difficult body mass management, which still remains an area of interest for the scientific community. Considering the failure to fulfilling physical activity recommendations, using this editorial, we suggest to the scientific community on creating an illustrated and clear guidance for general population regarding healthy nutrition accompanied with exercises in such circumstances.

Keywords: Weight control, pandemic, physical inactivity, restrictions, COVID-19.

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Introduction

Unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic paralysed normal functioning of life in the entire world. In order to stop the spread of the virus different restrictions were implemented (lockdown), which, consequently, caused health related issues resulting from lack of physical activity and malnutrition, putting a tremendous negative impact on public health.

COVID-19 and its effect on the lifestyle of the population at the moment is considered as a "hot topic" and different affected areas are being highly investigated⁽¹⁻⁴⁾. Over the years, physical activity (PA) and exercise has been promoted as a great tool to a healthy lifestyle and a precautionary strategy against numerous acute and chronic medical conditions⁽⁵⁾.

However, in the current situation (COVID-19 pandemic) there has been reported an enormous decrease of physical activity levels accompanied with the increased consumption of larger portions of meals and unhealthy food (sweets, fast-food) during home confinement in several European and non-European countries^(1, 6, 7). Decrease in PA was reported to lead to a sedentary lifestyle, increasing also the hours of sitting⁽⁷⁾.

Despite scientific recommendations on PA and healthy eating, due to governmental restrictions we were somehow forced to stop engaging in physical activity, affecting and making more difficult body mass management, which still remains an area of interest for the scientific community have been proposed in the past, yet nothing has helped people in this unexpected situation.

In addition, previous studies have highlighted that a combination of physical activity and proper diet promotes a positive effect on body composition, leading to general health improvements through preventing and reducing the risk for several diseases^(5,8,9). In the light of that, it has been reported that Mediterranean diet, low-carbohydrate and low-fat diets are effective and safe when it comes to weight loss⁽¹⁰⁾. These results are also highlighted in a recent review published by Dino et al., 2018, who reported that Mediterranean diet demonstrated to be a successful weight management method⁽¹¹⁾. Likewise, comparable results have been reported also by Paoli et al. highlighting the benefits of ketogenic diet on weight management. Nevertheless, both diets have shown a significant positive effect as prevention to several diseases (cardiovascular diseases, epilepsy, diabetes, cancer, neurological diseases etc.)⁽⁸⁾.

The part of the population which has been mostly affected from home confinement are the athletes of different sports, whom have had to drastically changed their daily routines. In this regard we might think of bodybuilders (physique models). Besides their engagement to exercise they constantly must take care of their food consumption, counting calories intake on daily basis. This approach might be considered as a monitoring and controlling strategy for the quality and quantity of the nutrition that should be consumed⁽¹²⁾ in general population. As reported previously, the proportion of protein and carbohydrate intake can be adjusted based on individual needs regarding weight management, thus can be considered as a strategy of diet to prevent extensive weight^(8,9,12). Despite scientific evidence related to PA and diets and its direct benefits to health, we did not manage to control nor to use this information on managing the body mass during the lockdown.

Although physical activity professionals and nutritionists all over the world tried to deliver as much information as possible regarding being physically active at home environment and healthy nutrition using social media and other online opportunities, it did not serve the purpose, as significant reductions in PA and increased body mass were shown in the related literature^(7,13). Hence, using this editorial we consider and strongly suggest to the scientific community on creating an illustrated and detailed guideline for general population regarding healthy nutrition accompanied with exercises in such circumstances. In this regard general population might be able to manage their weight which later on could prevent

several health-related issues.

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