



Abstract Utilisation of Technological Tools for Weight Management by Maltese Nutrition and Dietetic Professionals[†]

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Abstract: Background and objectives: The high obesity prevalence remains a significant global and local health concern. Digital technologies, including electronic health (e-health) and mobile health (m-health), are being increasingly utilised to prevent and address people's excess weight. Nutrition professionals' experiences with digital tools in local practices is a relatively unresearched area. The aim of this small study was to explore the utilisation of e-health and m-health by locally registered nutrition and dietetic professionals for weight prevention and management. Methods: An adapted, anonymised questionnaire was disseminated via social media between November 2021 and January 2022 following ethical approval. Twenty-four questions— (twenty-three close-ended and one open-ended) were included and covered: demographics, the challenges experienced and their personal attitudes on e-health and m-health. The data were statistically analysed using SPSS (IBM, version 23), where descriptive statistics and chi-squared tests were utilised. Results: The sample respondents (n = 20) were mainly female (85.0%, n = 17), with half in the 25–34 age category (50.0%, n = 10). A total of 90.0% (n = 18) used technologies in practice, with e-health technologies being preferred. Novel technologies were mainly used for informational or educational purposes (95.0%, n = 19) and to communicate with clients (85.0%, n = 17). Video conferencing (89.5%, n = 17) and educational websites (84.2%, n = 16) were the most popular tools. A total of 90.0% (n = 18) believed that these technologies could support weight management through behaviour change support (100.0%, n = 20) or provide updated information on healthy and sustainable eating (95.0%, n = 19). A total of 95.0% (n = 19) wanted to receive training/further training in digital technologies. The main personal challenge experienced was a difficulty in utilising these technologies (65.0%, n = 13). The main reasons for using digital health were to improve their clients' nutrition knowledge (85.0%, n = 17) and engagement with the self-management of weight and for overall health (80.0%, n = 16). Discussion: The results of this small study suggest an overall interest, but with further training needs. More research on e-health and m-health is recommended as part of an overall strategy to reduce the obesity prevalence in Malta.

Keywords: obesity management; digital tools; Malta

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.



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