

Foreword

The metabolic and behavioural effects of frequency of food intake has been an active area of research for over 40 years. Much of the earlier work focused on farm animals such as pigs and poultry. The first group to attempt to study the implications of eating frequency on human health was led by Pavel Fabry in Prague in the mid 1950s. Following a lull for some years the subject began to attract increasing attention since the early 1980s. Because eating frequency is governed by so many forces, it tends to be studied from different angles of interest by a wide variety of academic disciplines: medicine, dentistry, nutrition, dietetics, chronobiology and the behavioural sciences. The present workshop has provided the first opportunity for a multi-disciplinary review of this complex topic. The title of the workshop deliberately avoided the value-laden terms such as 'meal' frequency or 'snacking' frequency because such terms mean many different things to different individuals and groups. The term 'periodicity' in the context of the present workshop refers not to the calendar, seasonal or other longer-term influences in eating frequency but rather focuses on the variation within given days. The papers presented in the present supplement were all prepared in advance of the workshop and were distributed to all participants. Participants who wished to make comments additional to material in papers were encouraged to do so, and these appear at the end of some papers. Their written comments were also pre-circulated to provide the basis of a group peer review and for the revision of each paper at the workshop. It is hoped that in bringing such quality papers from disparate disciplines together in the present supplement that this subject will grow and develop to improve our ability as scientists to assist populations in attaining a healthy diet.

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