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Popularity and Perception towards Beverages for Weight Loss as a Weight-Losing Method in the Lifestyle of Medical Undergraduates, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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Background: With the increasing obesity prevalence, practical weight loss methods requiring minimal lifestyle changes are needed. Various beverages have been reported to aid weight loss.

Objective: To assess the popularity and perception of weight-loss beverages among medical undergraduates

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire to assess the popularity and perception of 11 beverages following PUBMED and Google Scholar search on 'weight loss' and 'beverages' with documented weight losing effects. A total of 490 medical undergraduates were recruited through self-selection sampling. BMI of the participants were self-calculated. Data were analyzed using Chi-Square tests.

Results: Among 490 respondents (26.5% male; Female: 73.5%), 57.9% expressed concern about losing weight, significantly associated with BMI ($p < 0.001$). 6.9% ($n=34$) participants claimed to use weight loss beverages and it was higher among female students (73.5%, $n=25$) and those with greater weight loss concern ($p=0.008$) but did not significantly associate with BMI ($p=0.155$). The number of weight losing methods used by a single person is higher in females than males ($p=0.006$). Awareness of the number of weight-loss beverages among the 11 beverages selected positively correlated with the number of beverages used ($r=0.407$; $p=0.017$). Participants used from 1 to 11 of the beverages (mean = 2.07, SD = 2.68), influenced by advertisements (28.0%, $n=284$), availability (20.3%, $n=206$), experience (19.4%, $n=197$), recommendations (19.3%, $n=196$), cost (8.8%, $n=89$) and prescriptions (4.0%, $n=41$). The most popular beverages were green tea (46.5%, $n=228$), water (35.3%, $n=173$) and lime juice (29.0%, $n=142$) selected mainly due to advertisements and availability. Notably, water (64.7%, $n=317$) and black tea (87.3%, $n=428$) are not consumed for weight loss purposes.

Conclusion: Weight-loss beverages predominantly used by female medical undergraduates, influenced by awareness, availability and advertising. Advertising increases the awareness of types and effects of weight-loss beverages. Though water and black tea are feasible and inexpensive they aren't widely used for weight loss.

Keywords: Beverages, Weight-loss, Medical undergraduates