

The relationship between diet, the gut microbiome and health outcomes: perceptions of consumers and nutrition professionals

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Background

The concept of 'gut health' is increasingly prevalent across scientific literature, food industry and social media. Despite this, heterogeneity in study design and inadequately captured dietary data means **we cannot yet define a 'healthy gut' or provide specific dietary recommendations to achieve this.**

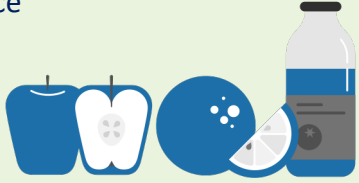
Aims

- To explore **consumer and dietitian** perspectives of the **term 'gut health'**, associated **dietary influences**, **information sources**, and **behaviours** related to gut health
- Inform **science communication** to take **advantage** of the **growing body of research**
- recognise what is required to **enable translational research outcomes** which can be **adopted in practice**

Methods

- Online focus groups (consumers, n=38)
- Online interviews (dietitians, n=14)
- Thematic analysis (in duplicate)
- University of Wollongong Ethics, ETH20 20/355

Results

Consumers	Dietitians
Gut health equates with wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-factorial Related to microbiota, unclear on specifics 	Dietetic practice regarding 'gut health' is multifaceted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gut health = gastrointestinal system function Microbiota play a role, not the whole picture
There are divergent perceptions of how diet influences gut health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fermented foods and probiotics prioritised 	Current practice in gut health aligns with national dietary guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probiotics and fermented foods not essential for health, may be 'added bonus'
Interest in scientific evidence does not necessarily influence dietary behaviour Mixed perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainties regarding how to access or evaluate Secondary to own experience Scepticism around scientific literature and government recommendations <p>Consumers are most likely to seek information from social media or social networks</p>	Dietitians seek evidence-based information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crucial to all practice Current evidence base is 'complicated', 'overwhelming', 'ever-changing' Evidence base limits confidence in current practice 
Gastrointestinal symptoms influence dietary behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Go with what I know' Curative rather than preventative approach 	Symptom management remains the primary concern <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualised and wholistic management Added benefit i.e., not focus of care

Future Recommendations:

- Consumers need **transparent, and practical** recommendations
- Consider dissemination of scientific literature **via social media**
- Education on role of diet-microbiome in **preventative health** is required
- Dietitians have a role for dietetics** in gut health research and translation
- Translational evidence and practice guidelines** are required for practice change
- Opportunistic focus** on interest in gut health to promote dietary guidelines
- Advocacy needed:** establish dietetics profession as experts in diet-microbiota practice

