SMART GOAL SETTING IN CURRENT DIETETIC PRACTICE IN PRIMARY CARE IN THE NETHERLANDS: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS OF THE DIEET STUDY

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Background
Current developments drive dieticians in the primary care setting to demonstrate their effectiveness to both patients and stakeholders. Working with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound) goal setting may increase effectiveness. This study describes the current dietetic practice in the primary care setting in The Netherlands with regard to goal setting.

Methods
This observational study was part of the DIEET study (DIEtetics: Effective and Towards a sustainable profession). Trained students performed structured observations during first dietetic consultations of patients with overweight (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²), diabetes mellitus type 2, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, or malnutrition in the primary care setting. Amongst numerous other factors, observations focused on (SMART) goal setting and nutritional assessment (NA). Chi-square tests were used to express associations between (SMART) treatment goals and NA.

Results
For these analyses, 292 observations were performed in 113 male (39%) and 179 female patients (mean age 56.9 ± 14.4 years) visiting 147 dieticians (2 male, 145 female; mean age 43.8 ± 10.9 years). Primary diagnoses were: 43% overweight, 37% DM type 2, 11% hypercholesterolemia, 6% malnutrition, 3% hypertension.

In 207 (71%) consultations treatment goals were defined, of which 58 (20%) were SMART. Most treatment goals were Specific (97%) and Attainable (87%), but only 21% were Time-bound (Figure 1). In 223 (76%) consultations NA was performed, including measurements of body weight (n=216; 74%), height (n=53; 18%), waist circumference (n=60; 21%), BIA (n=55; 19%), and skinfolds (n=1; 0%). Goal setting in general was related to performing NA (OR=2.6, 95%CI: 1.5-4.5, p<0.01), but SMART goal setting was only related to performing BIA measurement (OR=2.4, 95%CI: 1.2-4.6, p<0.01).

Conclusion
These preliminary results indicate that, in current practice, primary care dieticians define treatment goals in 71% of first consultations, but only 20% of dieticians set SMART goals.

The DIEET study will further explore whether SMART goal setting during the first consultation will result in higher effectiveness.

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