

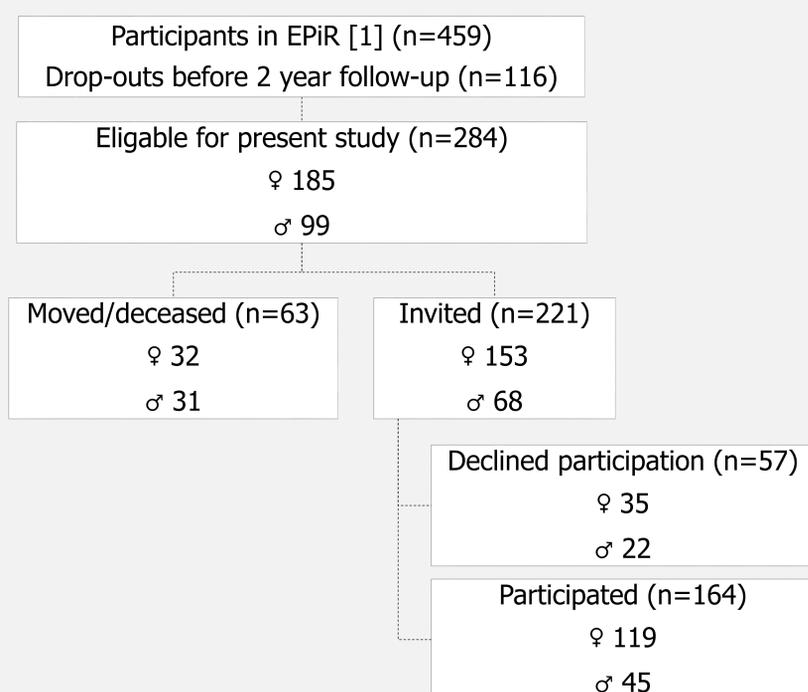
Preferences and attitudes regarding food choices and meal patterns among older adults – a cross-sectional survey

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Method

Cross-sectional survey carried out through questionnaires distributed and gathered by postal service. 164 community-dwelling 87-100 year-olds, 73 % women answered. BMI calculated from self-reported weight and height.

Figure: Flow chart portraying participants



Results

The majority reported no medical difficulties (♀71, ♂31). Preferred way of heating food was microwave (♀84, ♂36), stove (♀54, ♂22) and oven (♀41, ♂16). More women cooked alone ($p<0.01$) (♀101, ♂23). Only one man and seven women received convenience meals, 103 would not consider convenience meals home delivered (♀75, ♂28). The majority were not willing to buy groceries online (♀108, ♂40), of which 85 % answered the reason to be not owning nor trusting a computer, and 10 % regarded the store to be a joyous trip. 122 responded on a question about important practical issues when buying or receiving convenience meals, top three most important issues were that the packaging was easy to open (♀64, ♂23), easy to get food out (♀34 ♂13) and easy to read (♀31 ♂16). 89 considered food choices important (♀63, ♂26) and 83 enjoyed trying new flavors (♀63, ♂20).

Conclusion

This population of very old individuals show good health evident by nutritional status and regular meal patterns. Distinct gender differences were apparent according to planning and preparation of food with women taking a greater responsibility.

Introduction

The project Active Ageing – Individualized Meal Solutions for Health and Quality of Life is a collaboration between universities, research institutes, food industry & public sector intended to create a cohesive chain from order, packaging, distribution to safe deliveries of food & proper waste management to make it easier for older adults to maintain active and independent lives regardless of age, disease and disability. Aim was to explore attitudes, needs and preferences regarding food habits and meal patterns among older adults still living in their own homes.

Table: Background variables and results

	Women (n)	Men (n)	p-value between sexes
Education [1]			
Elementary school	58	13	0.013
Secondary school	13	3	0.013
University	48	29	0.013
Occupation [1]			
Labourer	69	36	$p<0.01$
Employee	37	3	$p<0.01$
Own business	3	6	$p<0.01$
Home maker	8	0	$p<0.01$
Age	90.7 ± 2.9 (87-100)	90.3 ± 2.6 (87-96)	n.s.
BMI (kg/m ²)	23.9 ± 3.4 (16.6-33.3)	23.5 ± 2.2 (17.8 – 28.5)	n.s.
BMI <22 kg/m ²	32	9	n.s.
Pleased with current weight	81	30	n.s.
Single household	103	20	$p<0.01$

Discussion

Response rate was high and subjects seems to be healthy and independent despite advanced age. Distinct gender differences were apparent with women taking a greater responsibility in planning and preparing food. Mean BMI indicated good nutritional status and a majority were pleased with current weight. Most of the women lived alone while a majority of men still lived with spouse or partner, which may affect the gender differences with regard to activities in the household such as acquiring or preparing food. The interest for buying groceries online was low, with a majority reasoning they did not trust the computer, indicating a resistance to technology.

References

- Gustafsson S. et al. Health-promoting intervention for community-dwelling older adults - Focusing on the concept of frailty and intervention outcome 2012.