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Abstract

Abstract of paper that presented at The 16th International Congress of Dietetics, 5-8 Sep, 2012, Sydney.

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Nutritional quality of Australian breakfast cereals – Are they improving?

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There is no systematic monitoring of the nutritional quality of Australian breakfast cereals (BFC) despite the importance of breakfast for general health. We therefore aimed to investigate whether the nutritional quality of Australian BFC has improved between 2004 and 2010, and whether the introduction of Daily Intake Guide (DIG) front-of-pack labelling has been associated with change. Supermarket surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2010 to collect information from the nutrition information panels of Australian BFC. Nutritional quality was assessed through reference to UK Traffic Light criteria. Nutrient content of BFC in 2004 and 2010, were compared as well as BFC with and without DIG labelling in 2010. The majority (64.2%) of BFC were considered high sugar. In 2010, ‘cereals for kids’ had significantly higher carbohydrate, sugar and sodium content (all $p < 0.05$), as well as lower protein and fibre content than other categories of BFC. No significant difference was detected in nutritional composition of BFC between 2004 and 2010, regardless of the presence of DIG labelling. Overall there has been little improvement in the nutritional quality of Australian BFC from 2004 to 2010. The majority of Australian BFCs were considered high sugar based on UK Traffic Light criteria. The introduction of DIG labelling has not resulted in appropriate product reformulation, and BFC carrying DIG labelling were not consistently healthier.

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