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TAKING THE BISCUIT

Real world impact of Christmas BMJ research

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Regular readers of *The BMJ's* Christmas issue may have seen our 2022 article, "Taking the biscuit: defining excessive quantities of free refreshments in a healthcare library," investigating staff attitudes towards free refreshments and what constitutes "excessive consumption."¹

This work identified that most people, when faced with the potential for unlimited free hot drinks and biscuits, would take no more than three free hot drinks and two packets of biscuits over the course of a working day. Free refreshments are usually intended to be a "work perk" to improve morale, and "back-of-a-biscuit-wrapper" calculations suggested that the cost to provide all NHS staff members with unlimited refreshments daily would be 0.084% of the total NHS budget. As such, the article concluded that any such initiative should be without restriction of "excessive consumption," with staff allowed to exercise their own judgment about equitable intake.

The BMJ's Christmas articles are frequently widely disseminated, generate substantial positive publicity, and have excellent Altmetric scores; despite notable exceptions,² however, we are unaware of them generating widespread changes to service delivery or clinical practice.

We were therefore delighted to learn that Derby and Burton Hospitals Charity had decided, independently of the authors of the original manuscript, to support an initiative providing free hot drinks for all staff members of University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust. They credited the Christmas article in *The BMJ* with providing support for the proposal and its modelling.

The recent implementation of this initiative unfortunately renders an impact assessment impossible. Although it is disappointing that other rigorous, snack based research has not yet seen effective translation into clinical practice,³ it is pleasing to see that even lighthearted research can have real world effects. This programme will support staff wellbeing and morale, which in turn enables them to provide our patients with better care. Dare we say that this initiative might even spread Christmas cheer throughout the year?

References

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