

## Impact of Education on Levels of Physical Activity and Depression in Taiwanese Vegetarians and Omnivores

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**Abstract :** Physical activity and mental health status are important for health. The purpose of this study was to examine levels of physical activities and depression in Taiwanese vegetarians (VEG) and omnivores (OMNI). Sixty-three vegetarians (20 males) and 56 omnivores (23 males) with an average age of 51 years were recruited for a food frequency validation study at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital from July to September in 2016. Participants filled out a validated Chinese version international physical activity questionnaire-short-form (IPAQ), Beck Depression Inventory-II-Chinese version (BDI), food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) and a questionnaire on demographics and medical history upon recruitment. Total BDI scores were calculated for depression and the metabolic equivalent of task (MET) was calculated for physical activity levels. Mann-Whitney U tests and Chi-square test were used to compare demographics, physical activity levels and depression scores. VEG and OMNI did not differ significantly on MET ( $1441.9 \pm 3387.3$  vs.  $1605.8 \pm 2486.1$ ,  $p=0.2652$ , respectively). VEG scored slightly lower on BDI compared to OMNI without statistical significance ( $5.6 \pm 5.7$  vs.  $7.4 \pm 6.3$ ,  $p=0.06$ ). In addition, we found that regardless of diet practice, those who held a college degree and above scored better on MET ( $1788.1 \pm 2532.6$  vs.  $1215.5 \pm 3425.5$ ,  $p=0.0014$ ) and BDI ( $5.2 \pm 5.1$  vs.  $7.8 \pm 6.7$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). In this cross-sectional study, Taiwanese vegetarians and omnivores scored comparatively on physical activity levels and depression. However, education is a significant determinant of physical activity and depression.

**Keywords :** BDI, diet, education, physical activity

**Conference Title :** ICBNPA 2017 : International Conference on Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity

**Conference Location :** Bangkok, Thailand

**Conference Dates :** August 30-31, 2017