

## **Abstract Title**

Exploring the influence of different media sources on food purchasing decisions: A qualitative study with parents of young children

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The home food environment is considered important in the development of children's eating behaviours. Parents shape their children's eating habits by role modelling and having certain foods in their household. Hence, it is important to understand how different media sources may be influencing parents' food purchase decisions.

**Objective:** The objective of this study was to explore which media sources may influence the food choices of parents of young children.

**Methods:** Parents of young children (aged 2-5 years) were invited through three childcare centres in Edmonton, Canada. Parents must have had at least one child attending childcare to be included, and be fluent in English. Three focus groups using a semi-structured interview guide were conducted from November 2017-January 2018 (4-6 participants in each group). NVivo 11 software was used to organize the data and transcripts were analyzed thematically.

**Results:** The mean age of participants was 35 years (n=15); 13.3% were men and 86.7% women. Households had 1 to 2 children. Three major themes related to sources of media and food purchasing decisions were identified: parents were interested in nutrition information from different media sources such as Netflix documentaries, podcasts, and radio. Parents based their food decisions on what they see, hear and read. Furthermore, parents faced challenges regarding nutrition information.

**Conclusion:** The vast amount and incongruent nutrition messaging in the media can create confusion among parents when choosing healthier food choices. Dietitians have an advocacy role in increasing the general public's awareness of what is considered trustworthy and credible nutrition information in the media.

**Significance to the field of dietetics:** This study helps to understand that parents need more guidance to navigate the myriad of nutrition information. Dietitians can take the lead in media by sharing evidence-based nutrition information in an engaging way to enable parents to make well-informed food decisions.