The Menzies Remote Short-Item Dietary Assessment Tool (MRSDAT) – a valid and reliable tool for assessing diet in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Key Facts

* The MRSDAT outperforms other food frequency questionnaires currently available for assessing diet in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in relative validity
* Updates to the MRSDAT have resulted in dietary quality index scores highly comparable to those derived from 24-hr recalls.
* The MRSDAT is a robust tool for measuring usual dietary intake with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from a diversity of age groups and life stages, and geographical regions of Australia.

Background

The Menzies Remote Short-Item Dietary Assessment Tool (MRSDAT) is a quick and easy way to assess individual diet, with an instant score provided on how well the diet matches the Australian Dietary Guidelines. This food frequency questionnaire was developed with and for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The MRSDAT was updated in 2019 to enable automatically generated feedback and extend its use across all Australian Dietary Guideline age and life stage groups.

Latest Validation Results

The updated, online MRSDAT has been validated with both children (6 months to 5 years), and adults (18 to 70 years), including pregnant and/or breastfeeding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Diet quality scores derived from the MRSDAT varied by less than 0.5% to those derived from 24-hr recalls. The original MRSDAT was also validated in children 6-36 months. Internal and external users report high respondent acceptance of the MRSDAT, and little/no missing data.

So What?

* The MRSDAT has the practical advantages of speed and convenience for research or national monitoring purposes, compared with multiple 24-hour recalls
* The built-in instant dietary feedback feature has application to service delivery settings.

Read the article:

Tonkin E, Chan E, Deen C, Fredericks B, Dhurrkay M, Dissayanake HU, Dhurrkay J, Gurruwiwi G, Biggs BA, Brimblecombe J. The relative validity of the updated Menzies Remote Short-Item Dietary Assessment Tool (MRSDAT) for use with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults. BMC Public Health. 2025 May 29;25(1):1990. doi: 10.1186/s12889-025-23233-x. PMID: 40442630; PMCID: PMC12121242.

Contact us:

Emma Tonkin, [e.tonkin@uq.edu.au](mailto:e.tonkin@uq.edu.au)

Acknowledgment:

This project is funded by two NHMRC Targeted Call for Research grants (project number 1179848 and 1179067). The contents of the published material are solely the responsibility of the Administering Institution, a Participating Institution or individual authors and do not reflect the views of NHMRC.