Investigating the range of internet-based dietary recommendations for individuals identifying with functional bowel symptoms.

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Abstract

With the growing availability of health information on the internet, promoted dietary advice may be influencing the intake and food avoidances of individuals managing their IBS symptoms.

**Aim:** The present study aimed to identify the range of dietary recommendations promoted on the internet for the self-management of IBS symptoms through a scoping review of the web search engine, Google Search.

**Methods:** A desktop analysis using Google Search was conducted using 68 searches with key words relating to: IBS, symptoms, dietary management and complementary specific diets. A total of 1,111 websites were recorded, and following duplicate removal, 335 websites were analysed. Data extracted included dietary recommendations, foods included and excluded, supplements, professional support referrals and encouragement of diet self-implementation.

**Results:** Five key categories of dietary recommendations were identified: “General dietary advice and common triggers removal”, “Fibre”, “Low FODMAP diet”, “Probiotics” and “Other specific diets and supplements”. Each category differed in overall frequency but were often suggested in numerous combinations. Recommendations ranged from diet modifications to complementary additions and specific diets, and these were commonly advised interchangeably.

**Conclusions:** The internet provides a large variety of dietary advice for the self-management of IBS. However, information was not always consistent and clear, potentially leading to confusion and reduced effectiveness when self-implementing. Coherent, systematic and evidence-based methodologies with an emphasis on dietetic support would be beneficial for the management of IBS symptoms.