



## Abstract

# How Can Older Consumers Become More Conscious of an Optimal Protein Intake—Outcomes of the ConsuBETER Study <sup>†</sup>

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The number of people that are 65 years and older living at home in the Netherlands is increasing. A healthy diet with sufficient protein supports their health and vitality. Our aim was to make older adults more aware of the importance of an optimal protein intake and to gain insight in how to support them in making the right choices. In this 2-year project, several studies were carried out to characterise the needs and preferences of the population, to calculate potential food intake scenarios, and to determine the influence of behaviour on protein intake. Qualitative studies with interviews show that many older adults do not want to change their current dietary behaviour and are unaware of the need for a higher protein intake. The participants underestimated the important role of dietitians. However, they were unable to properly estimate their current daily protein intake [1]. Different protein intake scenarios were calculated using the Dutch food consumption survey, in which regular food products were replaced by products (1) with a higher natural protein content, (2) enriched with protein, or (3) a combination of protein-rich and protein-enriched products. This theoretical approach showed that it is possible to increase protein intake (>1.0 g/kg bw/day) without a significant increase in the amount of food consumed [2]. We also studied different aspects of behaviour which influence the protein intake of older adults living at home. A total of 824 Dutch older adults living at home completed an online questionnaire on the influence of behavioural factors on dietary behaviour. Behaviour was characterized by the IChange model [3], and dietary behaviour was expressed as a risk on low protein intake, as determined by the ProteinScreener55+ [4]. The results show that mainly ‘knowledge’ and ‘social interaction’ were identified as independent determinants of elderly dietary behaviour [5]. Altogether, these data show the importance of dietary behaviour aspects such as knowledge and social interaction to optimise protein intake. They also show the opportunities to further improve protein intake. Our next question would be how to conduct this study in a sustainable way.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical and legal advice was obtained from the HAN University of Applied Sciences, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. It was judged not to fall within the remit of the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) and ethical clearance was provided by the review board. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were informed to consult their general practitioner and/or a dietician in case of a high chance of a low protein intake and received a flyer from the Dutch Malnutrition Steering Group with additional information.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Anonymized data can be made available upon request from the corresponding author. Due to privacy and ethical restrictions, data are not publicly available.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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