

Evidence may be lacking to link missing breakfast with obesity

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THE widely held belief that skipping breakfast causes weight gain is not backed by scientific evidence, an analysis shows.

The US researchers searched the 92 studies available on the proposed effect of breakfast on obesity and found the observational literature had gratuitously established an association, but not a causal link, between skipping breakfast and obesity.

A pooled meta-analysis showed skipping breakfast was associated with a 55% increased risk of obesity.

However, the authors found the association was established in 1993, the first year studies started appearing linking skipping breakfast and obesity, when three studies were published.

Studies continued to be performed and by 2011, the p-value for the association was less than 10⁻⁴², providing evidence of research lacking probity, the authors said, which they defined as experiments about questions that have already been answered,



or are designed so that they don't advance scientific knowledge.

"Although no universal threshold exists for what constitutes sufficient observational evidence, we posit that 10⁻⁴² is excessive and therefore, it was gratuitous to conduct additional association studies regarding the proposed effect of breakfast on obesity.

"Each study and analysis that is conducted costs time and resources that could be dedicated

to unveiling novel associations or engaging in randomised trials that can better define causal relations," they said.

They found many examples of biased reporting of the link between eating breakfast and obesity, including biased interpretation of results, improperly using causal language to describe results, and misleadingly citing others' results.

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