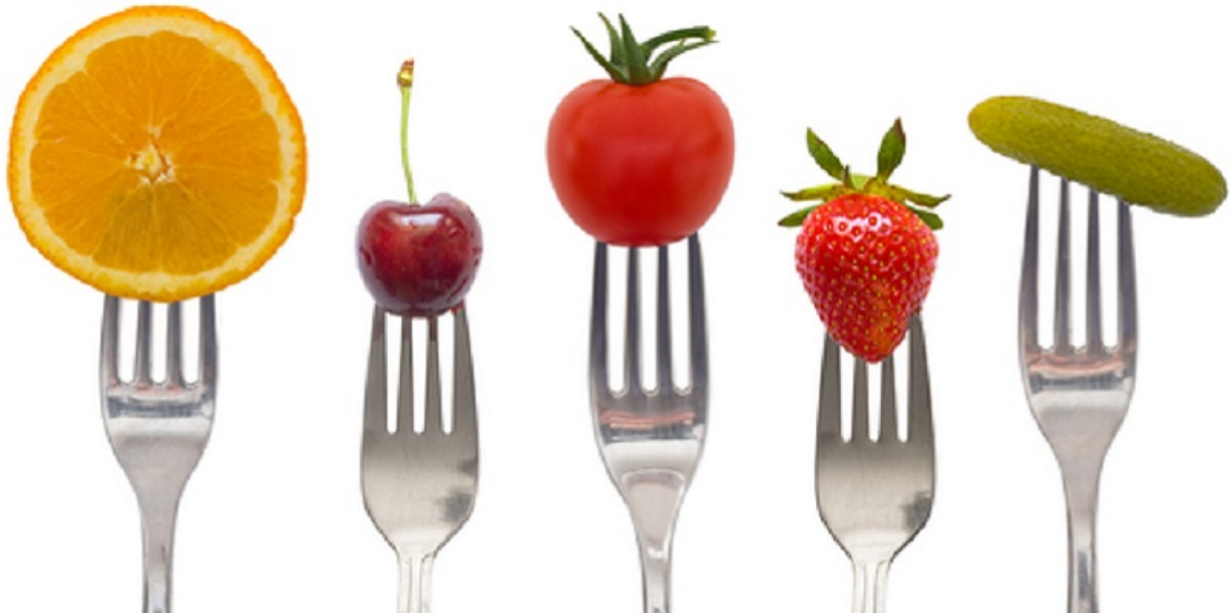


New spin-out firm tackles diet-related disease

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Credit: University of Leeds

A new spin-out company, Dietary Assessment Ltd, has formed to help track and analyse dietary intake.

Thanks to initial investment from the University's Enterprise Fund, the company has developed an online tool, myfood24, which allows researchers, teachers, health professionals and dietitians to monitor diet and analyse food and drink consumption to help reduce and manage diet-related diseases such as diabetes.

According to Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, we are now spending more on treating obesity related conditions than on the police or fire service. NHS England estimates that about £16 billion a year is spent on the direct medical costs of diabetes and conditions related to being overweight or obese.

myfood24 was created to help tackle this challenge. Funded by a grant of almost £1 million from the Medical Research Council, myfood24 was developed to stand up to the academic rigour demanded by world-class research into dietary intake. The website tracks not just the eight "back of pack" nutrients included on most supermarket foods, such as energy, fat, protein and fibre, but also more than 100 additional macronutrients and micronutrients such as vitamins and trace minerals which have been mapped by a team of nutritionists and dietitians.

After users have submitted details of their eating habits to myfood24's online food diary, the report generated will have a comprehensive nutrient breakdown of the food and drink consumed including the additional macronutrients and micronutrients unique to myfood24. This level of detail will help professionals to better monitor food intake and advise on diet.

Janet Cade, Professor of Nutritional Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Leeds and founder of Dietary Assessment Ltd, said: "While tools to track calorie consumption or protein intake are currently available, myfood24 is a tool that can stand up to the scrutiny needed to support a health professional's assessment or an academic research project.

"No other mainstream tool gives the full picture when it comes to [dietary intake](#). For example, an individual may be eating the average amount of calories for their age and sex but their intake of certain key vitamins might be lower than recommended, which could pose a health risk.

myfood24 can track the full range of nutrient intakes. The system includes all macronutrients and sub-components such as amino acids and fatty acids, starch and fructose; and all micronutrients, such as folate, B vitamins, and zinc."

Professor Cade added: "University investment and company launch is an exciting milestone for us. Dietary Assessment Ltd's vision is to reduce the incidence of diet-related disease across the globe by developing the tools to better track, monitor and improve diets. The investment from the University will enable us to further develop myfood24 and to better respond to a growing range of customer requirements."

Andy Duley, Director of Commercialisation at the University of Leeds, said: "The University of Leeds has a strong track record of commercialising innovative research and creating successful spin-out companies. We are delighted to support Dietary Assessment Ltd and believe it has an exciting future. In addition to the UK market, myfood24 is already being used in Australia, with German and Danish versions currently under development, so the market is truly global."

More information: To find out more, visit www.myfood24.org

Provided by University of Leeds

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