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Diets that bore older adults

The presentation offers a preview of the preliminary results from the PRE-BORED (Wellbeing and Prevention of Boredom in Spanish Nursing Homes) research project, funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions program. Over the course of three years, the study explored the lived experiences of boredom among institutionalized older adults across 20 nursing homes in Spain through a mixed-method approach combining standardized scales and in-depth interviews. While the original focus of the project did not explicitly include food quality, spontaneous comments from over 400 elderly residents revealed food as a central factor in their emotional wellbeing and daily satisfaction. Approximately 70% of participants identified food as the worst aspect of their residential experience, citing poor quality, lack of variety, small portion sizes, and feelings of coercion around meals. Statistical analysis also showed significant positive correlations between negative emotions—such as irritability and boredom—and dissatisfaction with food. This presentation highlights these unanticipated findings, underlining the overlooked yet crucial role of food in geriatric institutional care. It includes direct testimonies from residents, illustrating how food-related dissatisfaction contributes to a sense of monotony, physical weakness, emotional distress, and even weight loss. The research calls into question current food monitoring practices in residential care in Spain and advocates for more transparent, person-centered, and dignified approaches to nutrition in elder care settings.