

The main problems of food allergic consumers concerning food labeling: an ethnographic study.

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Abstract

It has been estimated that 5–8% of children and 1–2% of the adults in developed countries are affected by food allergy, with symptoms ranging from discomfort to fatality. At present, avoidance of problematic foods is the only effective treatment strategy. As of November 25th, 2005 food manufacturers in the EU are obliged to list 12 potentially allergic ingredients in food. Although the label is still not always fully understood by the consumer, or they get confused by precautionary labelling practices.

The purpose of this paper aims to gain insights into the information preferences that food allergic patients and their families have regarding existing food labelling and additional information delivery systems. The results of this study will facilitate the development of best practices in information provision regarding food safety in the area of food allergy. In particular the research will elicit preferences for new ICT approaches to information delivery which can be focused on the individual needs of consumers. We argue that improved information supply will contribute to the quality of life of food allergic people.

Keywords: Food allergy, consumers, food labelling, information needs

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