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Stress-eaters and stress-undereaters: Factors affecting their bi-directional feeding response in humans and in an animal model

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An emerging finding in the research literature, when it comes to determining how stress affects food intake and food choice, is that there is a continuum of stress-eaters; with some people in the population trending towards eating more than normal (~40%) when exposed to life stressors and some people eating less than normal (~40%). Studies from my laboratory have helped to identify these two major subgroups in the overall population: stress-eaters and stress-undereaters. This research has used both human research to determine how stress affects food choice and food intake in these two populations and animal models in an attempt to determine the possible etiology of stress-eating and stress-undereating. In human studies we have used a field study to get true to life data and a clearly picture of how daily stress affects the eating habits and food choice of stress-eaters and stress-undereaters. We have also conducted a controlled experimental study which induced two different kinds of emotional stress to determine how different types of stress affected emotional/stress eating. In animal studies we have done breeding studies in an effort to determine if there is a genetic component in producing the two stress-eating populations. And most recently we have used operant conditioning techniques to determine if there is a possible learned component of the etiology of stress-eating. This talk will give an overview of this research and, through this, help illuminate this emotional eating response that affects roughly 80% of the population.

Biography

Michael Hamilton Emond completed his PhD from McMaster University and Post-doctoral studies from John Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is currently an Associate Professor at Laurentian University.

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