Food preferences in children with insulin-induced hypoglycaemia: development of a food preferences task with help from the Young People’s Advisory Group (YPAG)

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Background
Sarah had recently developed an adapted version of a food preference task to examine food preferences in children and young adults. This task was originally designed by Prof. Peter Rogers and Prof. Jeff Brunstrom at the Nutrition and Behaviour Unit, School of Experimental Psychology. Sarah attended the YPAG to find out if the foods she had selected and photographed, as well as the overall computer task, would be accepted by young people.

Favourite foods
Sarah began by showing pictures of various foods and asking the group members to raise their hands if they would eat that particular food. It became clear that some foods are easier to photograph than others in a way that makes them recognisable or appetising. The group found edam cheese and chicken slices difficult to identify while a handful of cocktail sausages on a plate photographed from above triggered both laughter and groans of disgust before Sarah explained what they were. The graph below shows the final ratings of liking for the foods put together. Each colour is a different person, and the maximum score that could be given by the group was 110 (10x11).
Choose one from two

Eleven year old Luke was then asked to choose between randomly selected pairs from the original food types. After 153 choices, Sarah produced a graph showing his most preferred foods were ice cream and Ritz crackers with the least being eggs and tuna mayo. She also found that while his average decision time was 1.8 seconds, it only took 0.75 seconds to choose between Twix and chicken but he deliberated for over 8 seconds choosing between pasta and noodles.

How did the YPAG help?

When asked how the group had helped, Sarah said

“We will either modify some of the images or change the foods presented in the food preference task. We will change the labels that come with the images and will consider the option of reducing the number of trials in the task. The third part of the computerised food preference task, which measures ideal portion size, will also be set up such that all food options are simultaneously presented. Definitions of hunger and satiety will also be provided. Overall, the experience was extremely fun and useful. It surpassed my expectations, and I was especially impressed by the amount of participation of every person. I will rely on this resource again for future studies with young people.”