

# Influence of age and self-stigmatization on Social Eating and Drinking issues in French outpatients living with and beyond Head and Neck cancer (HNC)

**Purpose:** Public/Social Eating (PE/SE) → Eating and Drinking with others.  
Feeding + Swallowing + Speaking + Facing others' gaze → a basic but complex activity  
Part of quality of life and a cornerstone of aging well.  
HNC incidence ↑ in older people, who present physical and psycho-cognitive specificities.  
**Objective:** assess the influence of age and the role of self-stigmatization on SE limitations.

**Methods:** exploratory multicenter cross-sectional mixed method study.  
Eligibility criteria: adults diagnosed with various non-metastatic HNC, before, during or until five years after treatment.  
Assessed with the Performance Status Scale HN.  
→ Quantitative data/survey: of the study, SE habits, Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy Body Image Scale (FACT-MBIS) and specific to HNC (FACT-HN35)  
→ Qualitative study/semi-structured interview drawn out to explore stigma, especially self-stigmatization.

Fig 2: Self-stigmatization items in the FACT MBIS self-image subscale

		SELF-IMAGE				
		Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
100	No restriction of place, food or companion (eats out at any opportunity)	0	1	2	3	4
75	No restriction of place, but restricts diet when in public (eats anywhere, but may limit intake to less "messy" foods (e.g., liquids))	0	1	2	3	4
50	Eats only in presence of selected persons in selected places	0	1	2	3	4
25	Eats only at home in presence of selected persons	0	1	2	3	4
0	Always eats alone	0	1	2	3	4
999	Inpatient	0	1	2	3	4

Fig 1: PSS-HN PE rate

PUBLIC EATING / / / /
100
75
50
25
0
999

**Conclusion:** SE = of high concern in patients with and beyond HNC. Even in older patients experiencing less often artificial diet (less RTCT), body image changes, self-stigmatization and SE issues are as impaired as in younger patients and need to be addressed.

## Results:

A total of 112 patients were included, mean age 64.7 years, 23.2% of female.  
**One third (n=35) of patients had an abnormal PSS-HN PE rate <100.**  
**Younger patients had a lower PSS-HN-Normalcy of Diet mean rate (70.4 vs 82.7, p=.0498)**  
**Quantitative study: Seventy patients (72.2%) found SE and drinking « important » to « extremely important » in their daily life.**  
**Body Image subscores, as well as most FACT-HN subscores, were associated with PSS-HN PE abnormal rate (Table 1).**

Fig 3: Study Flow chart

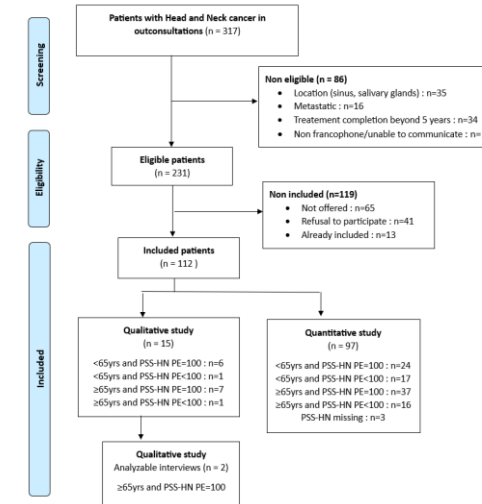


Table 1: Association between FACT-MBIS and FACT-HN35 subscores, and Public Eating PSS-HN abnormal rate

	PSS-HN rate =100 (n=61)	PSS-HN rate <100 (n=33)	p-value
MBI Total Median [IQR] score	82.0 [77.0-84.0]	77.0 [68.8-80.9]	<.001
MBI Self Image Median [IQR] subscore	42.0 [39.0-44.0]	39.0 [34.3-42.0]	<.001
MBI Social Discomfort Median [IQR] subscore	40.0 [38.0-40.0]	36.5 [33.0-39.3]	.00288
MBI 13 item			
Not at all	42 (68.9 %)	11 (34.4 %)	.00541
A little bit/somewhat	14 (23.0 %)	14 (43.8 %)	
Quite a bit/very much	5 (8.2 %)	7 (21.9 %)	
Missing	0 (0%)	1 (3.0%)	
MBI 14 item			
Not at all	41 (67.2 %)	14 (43.8 %)	.0196
A little bit/somewhat	17 (27.9 %)	11 (34.4 %)	
Quite a bit/very much	3 (4.9 %)	7 (21.9 %)	
Missing	0 (0%)	1 (3.0%)	
FACT-HN PWB Median [IQR] subscore	25.2 [23.3-26.8]	22.2 [17.5-24.5]	<.001
FACT-HN SWB Median [IQR] score	22.2 [19.3-25.7]	21.7 [17.5-25.2]	.691
FACT-HN EWB Median [IQR] score	19.0 [18.0-22.0]	18.0 [14.8-21.2]	.0240
FACT-HN FWB Median [IQR] score	19.5 [15.8-23.0]	14.5 [10.8-22.3]	.0311

**Qualitative study** reported self-stigmatization in two older patients and strategies they have developed to cope with in their behaviors of SE.

*"It's a frustration that I can't find in my mouth the sensations that used to make me enjoy eating with my children, with my friends, in a group, going to parties, and even on my own"  
"I'm touched when my children...cook good food for me. ...I'm a little embarrassed, but if nobody asks, I say I've enjoyed myself. It's a pure lie but there you go"  
Male 80 yrs*

*"My friends (ex-colleagues) came over to see me. Because I couldn't drink coffee, I'd offer them coffee and I'd offer myself a little glass of water, I had to get over it."  
Female, 65yrs*