

MEDIA RELEASE

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Major retailers dictate diet

Limited competition in the grocery sector could be having a serious effect on public health.

Researchers Jon Wardle and Michael Baranovic have highlighted the implications of major retailers dominating the market for consumer access to affordable, healthy food options.

This is the finding of a study published in the October issue of *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

“Retailers have a gatekeeper role in the provision of nutrition to the public through their ability to control access to supermarket shelves,” Mr Wardle said.

“Unless competition is improved, the numerous public health programs aimed at increasing consumption of nutritious foods are doomed from the start.”

Retailers such as Coles and Woolworths hold 80% of the retail food market and often have the power to set supplier prices and choose the product lines that appear on supermarket shelves.

This power puts price pressure on suppliers that may compromise nutritional values in their food production system.

Mr Wardle stressed the effect this had on populations.

“Lowered accessibility of healthy food choices as a result of an uncompetitive grocery sector should be considered a matter of public health concern as much as it is an economic one.”

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