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07 September 2008 New studies on the Mediterranean diet confirm its effectiveness for chronic disease prevention

It is effective in chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, hypertension or osteoporosis. Experts have insisted that it is possible to prevent 80% cardiovascular diseases and 40% different types of cancer through diet, physical exercise and other healthy habits. Scientists of the UGR are specifically analysing how cells react against aggressions which cause pancreatic alterations and result in cancer.

Scientists of the Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos (Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology) of the University of Granada (UGR, Spain) have been doing research into the positive effects of Mediterranean diet's ingredients on health. Among these works, there is a new research line about pancreatic cancer cells. Emilio Martínez de Victoria Muñoz, director of the Institute, points out that in the study 'Influence of the ingredients of the Mediterranean diet on a cell line on pancreatic cancer cells' (UGR-Junta de Andalucía) they have manipulated the composition of the cell membrane providing olive oil, fish oil or an antioxidant typical of olive oil, analysing how such cells defend themselves from the aggressions which cause pancreatic alterations".

The objective is to expose olive oil compounds (such as oleic acid) and fruit and vegetable antioxidants to "membranes of a pancreatic cancer cell line in such a way that they become more or less resistant to harmful stimulus which cause diseases such as cancer or pancreatitis".

This way, the research work intends to correlate the composition of cell membranes with more or less resistance to suffering from different types of disease. The conclusions suggest that feeding and changes in membrane composition affect cell function and can therefore influence the prevention of certain diseases.

Preventive feeding

The researchers' hypothesis "starts from considering feeding as a preventive action of the development of chronic diseases, which are the first cause of mortality and morbidity in the world at present: chronic or not contagious diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, hypertension or osteoporosis". Recent studies of the World Health Organization have pointed out as development factors of chronic diseases (such as obesity, diabetes or cardiovascular diseases) the combination of bad feeding practices, the lack of exercise and unhealthy habits (such tobacco consumption or excessive alcohol).

According to Martínez de Victoria, who pointed it out in one of the courses of the Mediterranean Centres of the UGR in Guadix, "WHO's projection is terrifying, as they have suggested that, in 15 years, the amount of diabetes 2 will double in the world and the incidence of different types of cancer will probably increase". But the key is to know that, modifying these three life habits, "we can prevent up to 80% of the cardiovascular diseases and 40% of the different types of cancer. The importance of this research lies in it".

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