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## Goji berries have the same nutrients as fruits and vegetables and a placebo effect

December 16th, 2010



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These are goji berries. Credit: University of Granada

A University of Granada professor specialist in Nutrition explained that the species *Lycium Barbarum* -- currently imported from China -- comes from the Mediterranean regions and grows in other mild regions of the world. Also, he stated that "Goji berries will not have any positive effect on people that do not follow a balanced diet."

While the consumption of Goji berries has risen dramatically over the last months, their properties

have not been scientifically proven yet by any relevant clinical intervention study with humans. Most of Goji berries' components are contained in the recommended fruit and vegetable intake in balanced diets. The only difference is the "significant placebo effect" on people consuming them. Also, the species *Lycium Barbarum* -to which Goji berries exported from China belongs- originally comes from the Mediterranean and belongs to the Solanaceae family, the same family to which potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and other vegetables included in the Mediterranean diet belong.

Such is the explanation given by Professor **Emilio Martínez de Victoria** Muñoz at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of the University of Granada. He also remarks that the supposed scientific studies endorsing the beneficial properties of Goji berries "were exclusively developed in vitro and in animals in China, but few have been conducted in humans out of China", although "the effects are likely to be the same".

### Numerous Nutrients

Goji berries contain numerous nutrients, as stated in a thorough bibliographic review recently published in the journal *Planta médica* (Medicinal Plant). This fruit contains antioxidants, complex polysaccharides (proteoglycan, which are considered to be the source of its beneficial effects on health) and monosaccharides, lutein and zeaxanthin (beneficial for the eyes), fiber, proteins and carbohydrates. Thus, "these berries can not have any damaging or neutral effect on human health", the University of Granada professor states. Caution must be taken with potential allergic reactions, and patients taking anticoagulant drugs should avoid the intake of this fruit.

However, "the consumption of these berries is but another fad" Martínez de Victoria warns, remarking that "Goji berries will not have any positive effect on people who do not follow a balanced diet". Anyway, anyone buying this product should pay attention to the label "to avoid adulterations, which are widely spread in the market". Berries must belong to the *Lycium Barbarum* or *Lycium Chinense* species, "which are the ones that contain the nutrients and healthy effects claimed".

The director of the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of the University of Granada warns that "miracle foods do not exist" and reminds that the only secret to enjoy a good health is "a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and regular physical exercise".

Provided by University of Granada

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