

Letter to the Editor

Comment on “Diet and pancreatic cancer: many questions with few certainties”

Dear Editor,

We read with great interest the paper “Diet and pancreatic cancer (PC) many questions with few certainties” by Cappellani A et al (2012)¹.

In particular, they analyzed the relationship between the incidence of PC and possible risk factors and they concluded that the role of high consumption of vegetables is controversial.

Vice versa the relationship between diet and cancer, especially gastrointestinal, are correlated and cancer prevention/development plays a significant role in its etiopathogenesis²⁻⁵.

Many studies have already demonstrated this strong correlation and highlighted that the excessive consumption of red meat, salt, salted foods and alcohol represent a high risk factor for carcinogenesis⁶⁻⁷.

Vice versa, the adequate consumption of fruits and vegetables is able to reduce the risk of carcinogenesis process, especially in the gastrointestinal tract¹⁻⁵.

A large European cohort study reported the results on fruit and vegetable consumption and Gastric Cancer (GC) by anatomic site. In the prospective analysis of the Alpha-tocopherol, Beta-Carotene (ATBC) Cancer Prevention Study, among 29,133 male smokers, the high consumption of fruits was associated with a lower risk of Gastric Non Cardias Carcinoma (GNCC), but not with Gastric Cardias Carcinoma (GCC)⁸. However, in the ATBC Cancer Prevention Study, the consumption of vegetables was not associated with any risk for GCC or GNCC⁸.

In a Japanese study (400 GC cases among 40,000 men and women) the relative risk (RR) associated with the fruits/vegetables intake 1 day or more per week compared with less than 1 day per week was 0.64 (95% CI, 0.45-0.92) for yellow vegetables, 0.48 (95% CI, 0.25-0.89) for white vegetables, and 0.70 (95% CI, 0.40-1.00) for fruits⁹. RRs associated with the quintile of total vegetable consumption were 1.00, 0.86, 0.75, 0.90 and 0.75, respectively (for trend, $p = 0.17$). Moreover this association became clearer for the differentiated type of GC, at 1.00, 0.96, 0.78, 0.88 and 0.53, respectively (for trend, $p = 0.03$). This study suggests that vegetable and fruit intake, even in relatively low amounts, is associated with a lower risk of GC.

In summary, the consumption of fruits and vegetables, particularly fruits, is probably protective against GC. Nevertheless, the constituents in fruits and vegetables playing a significant role in GC prevention remains unknown.

More evidences have been reported between the risk related of colorectal cancer and a diet low in fibre and high in fats and calories. Research in this area has had mixed results. Some studies have found an increased risk of colon cancer in people assuming diets high in red meat¹⁰.

Controversial is the role of the additives used in the food preparation. Another aspect, that plays a significant role, especially when associated with uncorrected diet, is the western lifestyle. In fact with the advent of affluent society, in the western Countries, there has been a significant increase in the incidence of cancer diseases. There are insufficient data on the use of organic food and risk of cancer. Moreover, another aspects that could require more attention is the impact of pollution in the food chain.

In conclusion, the winning strategy, to reduce the risk of cancer, could include: a low consumption of red meat, salt, salted foods and an adequate consumption of fruits and vegetables, to avoid smoke of cigarettes and to adopt a correct lifestyle.

References

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