

Micronutrients and immunity - working together

A new UK study* shows that a significant proportion of women of all ages have disturbingly low levels of intake of folate, vitamin D and A, riboflavin (B2), iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium, iodine, selenium and zinc, most below the Lower Reference Intake (the absolute bare minimum to keep standing). This is the time when our health authorities should be insisting that everyone - especially those in higher risk groups - should get tested. Not for SARS, but for the multiple micronutrient inadequacies which the British public lives with. Toward the end of July (2020) there were more deaths in the UK from pneumonia and flu than from COVID-19. One of the many studies which Public Health England has ignored is a global collaborative meta-analysis of data from more than a dozen countries published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2017. "Most people understand that Vitamin D is critical for bone and muscle health...our analysis has also found that it helps the body fight acute respiratory infection responsible for millions of deaths globally each year". And what about zinc? Widespread zinc deficiency is considered one of the risk factors for the development of pneumonia. It increases the susceptibility to infectious agents and prolongs the duration of disease. Clinical experience of COVID using zinc alongside zinc-transporting drugs has been by-passed in the rush to pump out RCTs (randomised controlled trials) most of which have not replicated the way zinc is being successfully used by some front line doctors. What has PHE or NICE got to say about zinc? Nothing - to say nothing of vitamin C. Then we had not one but two urgent reviews on Vitamin D. "There is no evidence to support taking Vitamin D supplements to specifically prevent or treat COVID-19". Of course there is no evidence for vitamin D. The only evidence these 'authorities' will accept is from highly targetted, randomised, placebo-controlled clinical trials. There have been no clinical trials studying the effect of Vitamin D supplementation in COVID-19 prevention! But what about the clinical evidence and decades of research which details a mode of action? Research suggests that Vitamin D does play a role in the immune response. That it helps fight respiratory infections is well proven. All the NHS (National Health Service) can offer is to say that "everyone" needs an average daily intake of Vitamin D equivalent to 10 micrograms or 400iu to protect bone and muscle health. How is anyone supposed to have a functioning immune system with all this going on? But hey, wear a mask and social distance.

The study concludes that these low levels of micronutrients are associated with the many health challenges faced by women: bone health, brain health, cardiovascular health, digestive health, eye health, immune function, reproductive health; that intakes of micronutrients should achieve recommended levels, but current diets are creating a nutrient gap. Whilst diets should be improved, supplementation to achieve the recommended intakes of all micronutrients as well as omega-3 fatty acids should be recommended, including 10 micrograms of vitamin D and for women during their reproductive years and 400 micrograms of folic acid. More than 66% of UK women are overweight or obese and have insufficient dietary iodine, 22% have brittle bones (osteoporosis) and 7% have diabetes. Among other nutrients including folate (B9), iodine is

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known to be crucial to foetal and child brain development, yet 82% of pregnant women, 52% of all 25-year-old students, 75% of 14-year-old school girls and almost half of babies have been shown in numerous studies to be deficient. 90% of women have blood and serum levels of folate below the WHO (World Health Organisation) cut-off points. 34% of girls aged 11-18 and 25% aged 4-10 have vitamin D significantly below the recommended levels, yet healthy bones are mostly built during childhood and adolescence. At the University of Sunderland, corresponding study author Mike Wakeman adds that "oral contraceptives have been linked with depletions of nutrients including folic acid, vitamins B2, B6, B12, C and E, and the minerals magnesium, selenium and zinc. Combined oral contraceptives may interfere with the laying down of bone due to the presence of oestrogen. Early research suggests that levels of long-chain Omega-3 fatty acids may be altered in women taking oral contraceptives". Dr David Edwards, a UK General Practitioner, says that among people over 65 women make up 55% and research is increasingly showing that good nutrition is crucial to healthy ageing.

- Précised from articles by Simon Martin, Editor of IHCAN, the Integrative Healthcare and Applied Nutrition published in that magazine, August 2020 (Target Publishing UK).

* Wakeman M, et al. *Women's Health in the UK - dietary and health challenges across the life cycle with a focus on micronutrients.* Journal of Virology and Mycology, June 2020.

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