

VITAMIN A DRAFT REPORT COMMENTS

From: M.E. Desorgher, director, World Community Autism Program.

re: Vitamin A Draft Report
<http://www.sacn.gov.uk/news/>

re: Vitamin warning for liver lovers
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4167675.stm>

Dear sir, Vitamin A deficiency is a major problem of populations worldwide. (5-10) The British Nutrition Foundation tells us:

"With the switch to lower fat dairy products and the lack of popularity of liver these days, there is evidence that retinol intakes have fallen. Carotenoid intake is largely dependent on fruit and vegetable intake and some people's intake of these foods is low. Currently there is concern about the vitamin A intake of some groups. For example, among British women, 15% of those aged 19 – 24 years and 10% of those aged 25 – 34 years were found to have a vitamin A intake below the LRNI; national survey data found that up to 20% of older girls and 13% of older boys in Britain also had intakes below the LRNI."

As you know, the public is very sensitive to government public health announcements, and often over-react when told that a food or a food supplement might be harmful. We are already seeing the media reporting this story as a new health scare: 'Vitamin warning for liver lovers' (BBC Website) The danger of increased Vitamin A deficiency at a time when increasing environmental stressors (pollution, environmental toxins) and increasing incidence of conditions that would benefit from increasing Vitamin A intake such as allergies, asthma, epilepsy and learning disabilities would suggest that increasing natural retinol and increasing healthy fat intake generally would be better advice for all. The low-fat, high colored fruits and vegetables approach has not increased public health or Vitamin A levels generally in the last 40 years in fact there is much evidence that the opposite is more likely true. It is high time the theoretical basis of low-fat diets and the public perceptions of the (un)-healthiness of fats in the diet is re-assessed and government health advice updated considerably to take account of modern research into the healthiness of essential fats and fat-soluble vitamins in the diet.

Since the 1960's, WHO and government health advice that beta-carotene is preferable to Retinol has led to an ever greater reliance on pro-vitamin A over natural retinol, despite significant concern about beta-carotene,(2-4) it's bioavailability(3) and whether it really is anti-oxidant (2). This has co-incided with great concern that low-fat diets have led to major health problems in Western populations, and that intake of Vitamins A,D,E and K and essential fatty acids are much too low.

Our work is in the specific nutrient needs of the autism population.(18) Research has shown that natural vitamin A (Cod liver oil) has remarkable benefits for people with autism.(1, 16) Comparable results have been shown for children with ADHD, who make remarkable gains with supplemental fish oils (17). We also have evidence that these population groups have trouble converting carotenoids to Vitamin A, and that autists react badly to lutein and/or betacarotene.(18) Increasing Fish oil in the diet has also been shown to help people with arthritis (20-22) and Coronary heart disease (23).

That there might be a correlation between excess Retinol and bone weakness in a small percentage of the population is no reason to again attack retinol as the best source of Vitamin A for the human population which will inevitably lead to a lowering of the intake of fat-soluble vitamins and essential oils in the general population.

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