

Greek children suffering from asthma abandon Mediterranean dietary pattern: Baseline results

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Statement of problem: The rapid rise in paediatric asthma has become a major public health concern. Apart from a genetic predisposition, poor dietary habits have been implicated as one of the environmental factors responsible for the asthma epidemic. Emerging evidence from observational studies has documented a reduction in asthma prevalence and wheezing in children consuming a Mediterranean diet. However, intervention trials investigating the association between food groups and dietary patterns in children are lacking.

Purpose: The purpose of this RCT study is to investigate whether an increase in fatty fish consumption in the context of a Mediterranean diet reduces asthma symptoms in Greek children.

Methodology: Children aged 5-12 years with doctor-diagnosed 'mild asthma' were recruited from a paediatric asthma clinic in Athens, Greece and randomized into two groups. The intervention group is instructed to consume 2 serves of fatty fish per week (at least 150g cooked fish/

serve) for 6 months. And the control group, their usual diet. Questionnaires are used to collect information on medical, dietary, socio-demographic, asthma control and quality of life. Respiratory function is evaluated using spirometry and exhaled nitric oxide analysis. KIDMED test is used to evaluate adherence to the Mediterranean dietary pattern.

Findings: At baseline, from a sample of 72 children (54.2% boys, 45.8% girls), mean KIDMED score is 5.38 ± 2.02 ; 21.1% of children have "Very low adherence", 60.6% "Need for improvement" and 18.3% "Optimal Mediterranean diet" adherence according to the KIDMED test.

Conclusion & Significance: There is a clear trend of abandonment of the Mediterranean lifestyle in Greek children. Given the sustainability and overall health benefits of the Mediterranean dietary pattern, it is essential that public health strategies focus on its promotion. Future clinical trials are recommended to provide concrete evidence on the efficacy of the Mediterranean diet in the management of childhood asthma.

Biography

M M Papamichael is a registered Dietician who has dedicated her life in educating people the importance of good nutrition and exercise in the prevention and management of disease as well as in improving health and well-being. Being an asthma sufferer since childhood, has motivated her to undertake a PhD research project at La Trobe University to investigate the prophylactic potential of a Mediterranean diet enriched with fatty fish in the management of asthma in children.

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