

WHITHER LIES THE BEDROCK OF PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE HEALTH

Abstract

Human health is highly dependent on the state of nutrition right from conception till old age. It is a well-established concept that what people eat or failed to eat has a ripple effect on their health whether in preventive or curative. However, due to lack of awareness and poor knowledge, many people have become unnecessary victims of preventable health challenges, especially non-communicable diseases. Presentation on evidence-based information on ways by which nutrition contributes to preventive and curative health is an important strategy to improve health. The goal of this presentation is to elucidate whither lies the bedrock of preventive and curative health in human existence?

Many researches have been conducted using various designs and investigative methods in the quest to provide scientific facts to explain the importance of nutrition in preventive and curative health. Experimental and control studies were conducted, food exchange list was developed to establish standards for food conversion factor and measurement to assist food intake in dietary management of diseases. In addition, some descriptive studies on anti-oxidants content of commonly consumed fruits were conducted to identify fruits with high level of notable anti-oxidants. The second level was assessment of serum anti-oxidant levels among cancer patients, especially those with prostate and breast cancers. Different methods of patient's dietary counseling were tested to determine the most effective methods to use in dietary management. Testing of different quantity and quality of protein intake based on the sources (animals and plants) in the management of renal diseases was also researched.

Standard measure to convert raw foods to cooked foods, which aids in measurement of food intake was developed. The use of food conversion factor to measure food intake was found to control of blood glucose, especially among type II diabetics. Anti-oxidant contents of local fruits including fresh and pureed tomato, watermelon, carrot, chili pepper and other coloured fruits were established to be rich sources of powerful anti-oxidants like lycopene, beta-carotene and ascorbic acid, which have been scientifically proven to suppress development of cancer cells. Serum level of these anti-oxidants was found to be very low among cancer patients assessed. Combined counseling method (individual and group) was found to be more effective than a single method of counseling during diet-therapy. Low protein diets from animal sources developed from Nigerian staples was found to successfully manage patients with moderate chronic renal insufficiency better than protein from plant sources. Combination of egg white with dried catfish diets followed by dried catfish diets alone were more efficacious in reducing blood urea, serum creatinine and symptoms of renal insufficiency when compared with diets containing cowpea.

Modification of local Nigerian diets has been adopted in dietary management of diseases with positive results. More research opportunities in the field of Nutrition and Dietetics using locally available foods are advocated for to assist in disease prevention, treatment and management.

Keywords: Dietary modification; Disease prevention and treatment; Nigerian diets

Word Count: 492