

Letter to the Editor

Vitamin Substitution Beyond Childhood

Requirements and Risks

by Dr. oec. troph. Alexandra Jungert, PD Dr. med. Katharina Quack Lötscher, and Prof. Dr. oec. troph. Sabine Rohrmann  
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Pseudo-Quantified Data

The article begins with the claim that the German National Nutrition Survey II (*Nationale Verzehrsstudie*, NVS) showed that the German population has a largely sufficient nutrient intake (1). The NVS II cannot show this at all. This study is not a measurement of dietary intake, but rather (to paraphrase from [2]) a collection of over 15 000 non-verified oral reports of memories of perceptions of dietary intake. This collection of anecdotal reports was then improperly pseudo-quantified in order to calculate numerous “data” that is not based on valid measurement. The resulting recommendations are therefore not derived from valid scientific data but are in fact purely fictitious and potentially implausible (3), regardless of the correctness or incorrectness of the recommendations.

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In Reply:

No method currently exists that exactly determines actual food consumption and the nutrient intake derived from it. In our opinion, labeling the elaborate nutrition surveys, which use standardized questionnaires and 24-hour recall protocols, as “anecdotal” reports does not seem appropriate.

24-hour recall protocols are an established method of estimating the mean nutrient intake of a population group (1). For national consumption studies, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommends the use of at least two 24-hour recall protocols and a food propensity questionnaire to collect information on less frequently eaten foods (2).

In the German National Nutrition Survey II (NVS II) that we cited (3), and which was criticized by Mr. Selig, diet history interviews were carried out in addition to two 24-hour recall protocols. Moreover, weighed food records were carried out twice for a subsample over four consecutive days during the study (4).

Further improving nutrition surveys is important and is currently a very active field of research. The latter is particularly true for alternative survey methods that are not based on human reports. Photographic methods are not yet fully developed or sufficiently validated. Biomarkers are currently of limited help, as there are often no generally recognized threshold values for classifying the nutritional status, and direct biomarkers for various nutrients are missing. To some extent, several biomarkers merely reflect the current rather than the long-term supply for the given nutrient.

In conclusion, it should be noted that especially combining various nutrition survey tools can provide sound and valid information about the situation of population groups. Nutrition surveys are an indispensable way to develop recommendations for action at the population level.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors of both contributions declare that no conflict of interest exists.