

The Mediterranean Diet and Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease

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Introduction: Heart failure is a progressive syndrome with high morbidity and mortality. Despite recent improvements to its treatment, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the world regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. As type of diet has a major role in cardiovascular disease, we decided to review the effects of the Mediterranean diet on this type of diseases. The Mediterranean diet is defined as the traditional dietary pattern found in the early 1960s in Greece, Southern Italy, Spain and other olive-growing countries of the Mediterranean basin.

This traditional diet is characterized by a high intake of cereals, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and olive oil, a moderate intake of dairy products, mainly in form of cheese and yoghurts, fish, poultry, low in red meat and other dairies.

Methods : Current study is a review based on different articles from 2013-2015. "PubMed", "Google scholar" and "science direct" were searched to find studies on the Mediterranean Diet and cardiovascular disease, using "Mediterranean Diet" matched with "coronary heart disease", "Dietary intervention", "stroke", "cardiovascular disease", "primary prevention" and "dietary index" as key words. Finally, 15 studies were retrieved and 6 were chosen based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

This study considered three types of diets a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil, a Mediterranean diet supplemented with mixed nuts, and a control diet (advice to reduce dietary fat).

Results : A total of 7447 people (55-80 years old, 57% men and 43% women) enrolled and filled the self-report questionnaire. The primary heart attack occurred in 288 participants. Ninety six events for the group assigned to Mediterranean diet with extra virgin olive oil, 83 events for the group assigned to Mediterranean diet with nuts and 109 events for the control group.

Conclusion : Findings suggest that an overall dietary pattern that is rich in high-unsaturated fat from natural vegetable sources is preferable for CV health than a low-fat diet. Taking into account the advanced age of many participants, it can be concluded that it is never too late to improve the food pattern to improve CV health.

Keywords: Mediterranean Diet, coronary heart disease, Dietary intervention, cardiovascular disease, primary prevention, dietary index