

EFFECTS OF MEDITERRANEAN DIET ON NON-
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

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ABSTRACT

The Mediterranean Diet (MD) has been associated with greater longevity and quality of life in epidemiological studies. It reflects the dietary patterns characteristics of several countries in the Mediterranean Basin during the early 1960s. The most commonly understood version of the Mediterranean diet was presented by Dr Walter Willet of Harvard University's in mid-1990s, including a book for the general public. This study is aimed to outline the influences of the Mediterranean diet (MD) on human mortality and age related morbid conditions, especially the metabolic syndrome, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer, poor bone mineralization and rheumatoid arthritis, and neurodegenerative disorders. Citations were selected from PubMed search and google scholar according to their clinical and experimental relevance. It was found that individuals who adhere to the principles of the traditional MD tend to have a longer life-span. The longevity of Mediterranean people has been related to their diet which consists of olive oil, and its several microcomponents of antioxidant potential, present in all MD food types. The prevalence of the metabolic syndrome may be reduced by a MD. The MD is inversely associated with both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. It also prevents cardiovascular events, reduces the risk of mortality after myocardial infarction, and reduces peripheral arterial disease. Adherence to traditional MD reduces the risk of obesity. The MD also has a preventive effect on cancer, through its antiproliferative and proapoptotic effects, mostly due to the components of virgin olive oil and vegetables. In general it can be inferred that the traditional Mediterranean diet represents a healthy nutritional pattern. Keywords: Mediterranean Diet, age related morbid conditions, longevity, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular problems.