Nutrition and Mental Health

Introduction

Nutrition is linked to mental health in a variety of different forms. Before getting into the specifics of what can potentially help those with various mental health issues, it is important to note that eating a healthy diet or supplements cannot replace a medication regimen. (Miller)

Vitamins

There have been treatments from various medical professionals that detail various vitamin deficiencies that could be occurring in patients. For example, Robert Hedaya noticed that a patient of his was suffering from panic disorders had a deficiency of vitamin B12. With this data verified, Dr. Hedaya began vitamin B12 injections and days later the panic attacks no longer existed with this specific patient. (Ohlson)

Although some might believe that this approach for nutrition and its effects on mental health to be a more new style of approach, there have been people who have been tackling this issue since the 1950’s. In Canada, medical researcher and Canadian physician Abram Hoffer started healing those with schizophrenia using vitamin B3, otherwise known as niacin, and had a 75 percent cure rate. (Ohlson)

Instead of taking the vitamin B3 vitamin that can cause a flush in the skin, there are many very healthy foods that can give you a high niacin dosage. These foods include turkey, chicken breast, peanuts, mushrooms, liver, tuna, green peas, grass fed beef, sunflower seeds, and lastly avocado. (Axe) It is important to note that all of these contributions show a positive effect upon the patient in using vitamins or diet as a way to help combat symptoms.

There are a multitude of different vitamins that can help reduce the symptoms of schizophrenia, one being omega-3 fatty acids for a couple of different reasons. The first being that the brain is 60 percent composed of fat and the omega-3 fatty acids help maintain the integrity of the cell walls.

There have also been reports of Niacin (otherwise known as vitamin B3, as stated above) that can help reduce the symptoms of schizophrenia that are seen in patients. Hoffer recommends pairing a high dose of vitamin B3 with vitamin C. This reasoning is for that vitamin C disallowed the oxidation from adrenaline to the form of adrenochrome, which Hoffer concluded to have the ability to promote psychotic behavior. (Ohlson)

Diet

Having a diet that is high in refined sugars can create oxidative stress and inflammation, and can create ever worsening troubles with mood disorders, more specifically depression. It is also noteworthy that taking probiotics can lower the perception of stress, their mental overall mental outlook can improve, and that anxiety levels could lessen.

The typical unhealthy Western diet compared to a traditional Mediterranean or Japanese diet demonstrated that eating a traditional diet lowers the risk of depression from 25 to 30%.
The main difference in eating these traditional diets over the typical unhealthy western diet is that these traditional diets are high in fruits, vegetables, unprocessed grains, modest cuts of meat plus dairy, and last but not least, a moderate amount of fish and seafood. (Selhub)

These dietary changes can have a great effect to alleviate the causes and symptoms of depression. In a research study led by Felice Jacka, around 60 adults diagnosed with depression were randomly sent out for seven nutritional consulting sessions lasting at around twelve weeks. Approximately 8 percent of the group that only ingested medication and made no change to their diets achieved remission, whereas almost a third of the dietary intervention group achieved remission. (Clay)

**Lifestyle**

Apart from the specific disorder of schizophrenia, there are more general ways to carry a healthier lifestyle for the brain regarding nutrition. One aspect of nutritional mental health is to treat your brain as if it was an expensive car. High quality cars require premium fuel, and since your brain is working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty five days a year, it requires quality nutrients to work at optimum capacity.

**Conclusion**

Whether it is nutritional supplements or trying to eat a more well-balanced diet, there are a multitude of connections between mental health and nutrition. Lucky for all of us, the research is growing and there is a lot more to be discovered. It’s safe to say the future of nutrition and mental health is looking very bright.

David Snebold

Volunteer, Cole Resource Center

**Bibliography**


