Abstract

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Title: Can an elimination diet have effects on the symptoms of a child with ADHD?
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Programme: Dietician study programme, 180/240 ECTS
Type of paper: Examination paper, 15 hp
Date: May 22, 2012

Background: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects 5.3% of all children and adolescents globally. There are many theories about why some people develop ADHD. The diagnosis is characterized by attention deficit, impulsivity and hyperactivity. There are different types of treatments, including therapy and medication but there is a hypothesis that food also may influence the symptoms.

Objective: To evaluate if an elimination diet can have an effect on the symptoms of a child, diagnosed with ADHD.

Search strategy: Data collections were conducted in the search engines PubMed and Scopus in February of 2012. Search terms used were the following; "Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity, diet" and "elimination diet" AND "Attention Deficit Disorders with Hyperactivity" AND "children".

Selection criteria: The included studies were randomized controlled trials (RCT’s), in Swedish or English, which studied the effects of elimination diet on the symptoms of children with diagnosed ADHD. The population had to be based on more than 20 children, aged 0-18 years. They were not to be treated with psychotropic medication during the study. The primary endpoints were ADHD Rating Scale and Abbreviated Conner's Scale (ARS and ACS).

Data collection and analysis: Abstracts of 30 articles were read and two studies were included. The data collection was performed according to the selection criteria. They were analyzed using a standardized template, published by “Statens Beredning för Medicinsk Utvärdering” (SBU). The results were then combined and evaluated by the “Sammanfattande evidensformulär” published by the Institution for Internal medicine and Clinical nutrition, Sahlgrenska Academy.

Main results: The studies showed that the elimination diet had a significant improvement in terms of symptoms in children with ADHD. In one trial, 70% of the subjects in the intervention did no longer meet the criteria for ADHD after the intervention. The evidence value of the studies was moderate.

Conclusions: All the included studies showed that children with ADHD scored better on the estimation forms, ACS and ARS after they were put on an elimination diet. The evidence value of the studies was moderate. However, more studies are necessary to strengthen these results, to make the elimination diet a part of the treatment of ADHD.