



October 22, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

Why You Need to Supplement

The author of the opinion article in JAMA recommended that physicians make their patients aware of the research that questions the effectiveness of supplementation, hence his title “Negligible Benefits, Robust Consumption” (1). In making that recommendation, he gives the precise reason why that’s a bad idea. As I said [Thursday](#), the answer can be found in the data used in the original article in JAMA about supplementation use in the U.S. (2).

While the JAMA article focused on supplementation, it also included data on food consumption. As I’ve mentioned before, NHANES uses a Food Frequency Questionnaire with an interview by a trained researcher; that’s about as accurate as possible in studies with thousands of subjects. Because the data is open access, many researchers have examined the data for a variety of research questions; the most basic is simply what do people eat. For this message, I’ll focus only on vegetable and fruit consumption (3).

The USDA’s most recent dietary goals for vegetable and fruit consumption for men and women (4) are reported in cup equivalents; so were the data from NHANES 2009-2010 (3). This is a straightforward comparison with no adjustment for other factors: how much should we eat and what do we actually eat. Here’s what I found for adults over 20.

Fruit

The daily goal for fruit is 2 cups for men and 1.75 cups for women.

The average intake is 1.1 cups for men and women. However about 40% is fruit juice; that isn’t necessarily bad, but it does reduce fiber content somewhat. The result of this analysis means that adults get about half the fruit intake they should every day. Keep in mind these are minimal goals, not directives for optimal health.



Vegetables

The daily goal for vegetables is 3 cups per day for men and 2.5 cups for women.

Men get 1.7 cups of vegetables per day, while women get 1.5 cups per day. Not too bad—except that when you look at the breakdown, men get less than half the amount of dark green vegetables and with the exception of tomatoes, virtually none of the red and orange vegetables they should. Women do better on dark green vegetables but negligible amounts of red and orange vegetables other than tomatoes. As with fruit, we’re eating just about half of the daily goals for vegetables.

The Bottom Line

The analysis I did wasn’t complicated, it was simple and straightforward. The data were there to examine. My point is that the physician who wrote the opinion piece did not have the nutrition and statistical background to do the simplest analysis to see why people should supplement (or he chose not to do it because it didn’t support his

position, but that's a different question). If someone who criticizes the supplement industry doesn't do a basic analysis of available data on nutrition, what are the odds any other physician would?

I think the research shows, based on research the author himself gave and given what Americans actually don't eat, basic supplementation is necessary just to meet basic nutrition levels.

Live in Chicago!

If you want to know all the reasons we should supplement, join me in Chicago for my [Supplementing for Health](#) seminar. I'll cover the reasons why supplementation is critical, basic supplementation for everyone, and targeted supplementation for common conditions. Join me on November 20th at 2 p.m. Check it out and reserve your seat today!

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. JAMA. 2016;316(14):1453-1454. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.14252
2. JAMA. 2016;316(14):1464-1474. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.14403
3. www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/fsrg
4. www.choosemyplate.gov

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