

Health and nutritional status of elderly Greek migrants to Melbourne, Australia

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Key Words:

Nutrition, Greece, Australia

Research aim:

To compare the health (self-reported health conditions) and nutritional status (food and nutrient intake, nutritional biochemistry, anthropometry) of 189 elderly Greeks living in Melbourne with 104 elderly Greeks living in a rural town in Greece (Spata) using a validated health and food frequency questionnaire.

Results/Conclusion:

This enabled identification of dietary trends that may be contributing to the deteriorating health of elderly migrant Greeks. Compared with Spata Greeks, Melbourne Greeks had significantly greater intakes of animal foods (meat), legumes, protein, margarine, polyunsaturated fats, beer and lower intakes of cereals, carbohydrates, wine and olive oil. The contribution of these dietary differences, as well as the influence of high storage-iron levels, impaired immunity and greater prevalence of obesity and abdominal fatness, to the increasing prevalence of heart disease and cancer (especially amongst women) requires further study.

Implications:

The contribution of the dietary differences, as well as the influence of high storage iron levels, impaired immunity and greater prevalence of obesity and abdominal fatness, to the increasing prevalence of heart disease and cancer, especially amongst women, merits further study.

Cultural Group(s):

Sparta Greeks and Australian Greeks

Location of study:

Greece and Australia

Age group:

70+

Number included in study:

104 in Greece and 189 in Australia

Type of participants:

Older Greeks and Australian-born Greeks, aged 70+ living in the community.

Research approach:

Quantitative

Type of data:

Primary

Secondary data sources used:

Specific scales or analytical techniques used:

Multi-level Assessment Instrument for health status, an adaptation of the food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) from the Australian Polyp Prevention Project which included Greek foods and dishes (50 foods) plus a series of medical and blood checks. Non-parametric statistics (Wilcoxon rank sum test; continuous variables) and χ^2 (discrete variables) were used to test the significance of differences between sex, age group and centre (location).

Implications/ Recommendations:

Notes: