

Nutrition Discussion Forum

Dietary supplement use and mortality in a cohort of Swedish men – comments by Boucher

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A recent paper published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* suggested possible reductions in mortality in association with the use of dietary supplements, giving specific findings for vitamins C and E and for fish oil⁽¹⁾. In view of the randomized controlled trials of certain vitamin supplements in smokers that had to be curtailed because of adverse effects^(2–4) these findings are, as the authors say, of considerable interest, especially since they are prospective, even though supplement use was self-selected in the 38 994 men studied.

Most multivitamin supplements available in the UK contain vitamin D and the use of vitamin D supplements has been reported to be associated with reductions in mortality rates and in all-cause mortality in two large prospective studies^(5,6). One wonders, therefore, why the above paper does not refer to vitamin D.

There is an obvious need to identify whether the current high prevalence of hypovitaminosis D worldwide is causally associated with many health risks, and for appropriate levels of supplementation to be identified⁽⁷⁾. It would be of considerable interest and importance to know, therefore, whether vitamin D supplementation was examined by Messerer *et al.*⁽¹⁾, whether mixed vitamin supplements in Sweden never contain vitamin D or whether there were no meaningful associations of vitamin D with the reported outcomes.

I declare no conflict of interest.

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