Nutritional factors and bone health status of retired lead workers in the Republic of Korea

Hee-Seon Kim¹, Jung Eun Youn¹, Cheong-Min Sohn², Nam Soo Kim³, Andrew Todds⁴, Sung-Soo Lee³ and Byung-Kook Lee³

¹Department of Food Science and Nutrition, Soonchunhyang University, 646 Eupnae-ri, Shinchang-myun, Asan, Choongnam, 336–745, Republic of Korea, ²Major in Food and Nutrition, Wonkwang University, 344–2 Sinyong-Dong, Iksan, Jeonbuk, 570–749, Republic of Korea, ³Institute of Environmental and Occupational Medicine, Soonchunhyang University, 646 Eupnae-ri, Shinchang-myun, Asan, Choongnam, 336–745, Republic of Korea and ⁴Department of Community and Preventive Medicine, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, New York, USA

The objective of this study was to investigate the nutritional and health status of retired industrial workers. Two-hundred-and-twenty-eight (172 lead and 56 office) workers were recruited from March 2006 to October 2006. Information on age, smoking and drinking status were collected using questionnaire and the nutrient intake of workers was assessed by an average of the 2-d 24 h recall method. Biochemical indexes including blood lead level (PbB),indexes for Fe status, serum calcium (Ca) and serum lipid profiles were analysed from fasting venous blood or serum. Broadband ultrasound attenuation (BUA) was used as a surrogate of bone mineral density and measured at the left calcaneous bone area. The bone lead contents were also analysed using XRF from the right tibia. Results showed that more drinkers and smokers were reported among retired lead workers than office workers (P < 0.01). Tibia lead contents, serum lead, alkaline phosphatase and parathyroid hormone levels of retired lead workers were significantly higher (P < 0.01) than that of retired office workers. However, HDL cholesterol and dietary animal calcium intake levels were significantly higher in the control group (P < 0.05). Factors affecting BUA most significantly were age, plant fat, BMI, sex, HDL-C, tibia lead. This study confirms that lead workers need extra care to maintain their health and nutritional management. Tailored nutrition education for workers at specific working fields needs to be more focused for the improvement of health status of industrial workers.

This study was supported by Korea Research Foundation Funds (KRP-2004-02-E00048).