

Contemporaneous nutrition as an obstacle to cure

by Dr Augusto Cura



After a childhood and adolescence with several health complications, Dr Augusto Cura decided to study classical homeopathy when he observed the amazing results of homeopathic treatment on himself. He has a degree in dentistry from the University San Sebastián in Chile (2008).

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Our diet has changed as the centuries have passed; new foods and eating habits have been integrated into our daily diet and many studies have been carried out in recent decades. It has been proved that food can positively or negatively affect our health, triggering symptoms that homeopaths can recognise as a guide for treatment. But what symptoms result from the inherent imbalance of the vital force of the patient, and what symptoms are due to alimentary symptoms such as nutrient deficiencies or excess, or toxic effects from food additives?

The purpose of this article is not to go into detail about the food we eat on a daily basis, but to give a general idea of how our diet could affect our health.

The concept of diet or nutrition as an obstacle in homeopathic treatment is nothing new. In the *Organon* Hahnemann refers to certain foods that may interfere with the homeopathic cure. It is known that food can have a tremendous impact on health. Hippocrates, 'the father of medicine', states: 'Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food'. This clearly shows his belief that food can have this effect on health.

Thanks to advances in technology, it is possible to identify and even isolate the essential nutrients that human beings need (amino acids, vitamins, fatty acids, minerals and trace minerals). Nutrients that we obtain through diet allow our cells to fully accomplish metabolic functions, regulation, creating energy, and so on. Without these nutrients, life would be impossible.

Foods provided by Nature were created to give us every single nutrient required in order to develop.

However, as nutrients are not distributed equally within foods, it is necessary to have a varied and balanced diet.

We obtain amino acids from proteins, and proteins mainly from meat. We also get proteins from legumes and some cereals such as quinoa and amaranth, but in lower amounts. Fruit and vegetables contain some amino acids, but are a low or incomplete source of essential amino acids.

Vitamins are inorganic compounds that work as co-factors or co-enzymes in chemical reactions of an organism. We can separate them into two groups, water soluble and fat soluble. According to different authors, humans need 13-16 kinds of vitamins from food; these are known as essential vitamins (Vitamin D can also be obtained from the sun).

With regard to fatty acids, two are considered essential: omega-3 and omega-6. Omega-3 fatty acids



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are obtained mainly from fish and seeds such as flaxseed and chia. However, the amount and quality of omega-3 derived from fish is highly superior to seeds. On the other hand, omega-6 fatty acids are found in seeds, dried fruit and vegetable oils.

Minerals and trace minerals are mainly obtained from all natural foods. However, as fruit and vegetables are so diverse, they contain these substances in very different amounts.

All these nutrients are needed for life. Unfortunately, every day our foods lack more and more minerals and vitamins.

We ingest minerals through meat and plants. Plants absorb minerals from the soil in a metallic state and then the plant processes them into a colloidal form. This colloidal state, derived from plants, is how we can absorb minerals. However, centuries of mining, farming, irrigation and acid rain have eroded and depleted the minerals in our soil, which has led to a decrease in the amount of minerals in our food.

Vitamins are available in a different way; plants absorb carbon dioxide from the air and can make vitamins by themselves. Even so, the amount of vitamins to be found in fruit and vegetables is less than before. A possible explanation is that minerals act as co-factors for making vitamins.

According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the amount of vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables is decreasing. In 1975, 100g of blueberries contained 15mg of calcium and, 29 years later in the year 2004, the same amount of blueberries contained just 6mg of calcium, which is 60% less. Broccoli, kale, corn and apples have also shown a decrease in the amount of calcium: 54%, 46%, 33% and 14% respectively. Similar studies prove that this trend has happened with other foods, minerals, and vitamins.

Calcium is an essential mineral and the most abundant in the human body. It is involved in many

Centuries of mining, farming, irrigation and acid rain have eroded and depleted the minerals in our soil

tasks in organisms and its deficiency may lead to arthritis, bone spurs, brittle nails, kidney stones, insomnia, cramps, dental cavities, premenstrual syndrome and more. These are all easily identifiable as homeopathic symptoms and, if we came across them in homeopathic case-taking, we would no doubt seek the modalities, integrate them into the totality of symptoms and then prescribe the simillimum.

Chromium is another essential mineral. Its deficiency in diet is associated with sugar imbalances in the blood which can lead to behavioural problems, ADHD, faintness, night perspiration, enuresis, and the desire for sweets. Again we can see classic homeopathic symptoms, but they can also be regarded as symptoms of nutritional deficiency.

Now, without going into greater detail with each mineral, vitamin, amino acid, and essential fatty acid, and the symptoms for their deficiencies, we are able to see that any of these symptoms could be seen as homeopathic.

Amount of vitamins and minerals

Humans, as with every species, require a specific minimum amount of nutrients in order to stay healthy and not suffer from disease or symptoms of nutritional deficiency. Every human needs the same nutrients, from a new born to an

The amount of vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables is decreasing

▷ adult; however, the amount varies according to body weight and activities. For example, a person who practises high performance sport five days a week, requires more nutrients than someone who sits in an office all day. In the first case, the sportsman is more likely to suffer diseases of nutritional deficiencies than the second person if he doesn't eat correctly. When we practise sports, the body not only needs energy, it also needs a large amount of vitamins and minerals.

It is no coincidence that some sportsmen, including elite sportsmen, suffer from bone and joint pains (not caused by trauma), or type 2 diabetes, during or after their career. In other cases, sportsmen die suddenly from a heart attack.

In these three situations the first thing that comes to mind is that there is a hereditary predisposition to these health problems. Especially since, in the case of type 2 diabetes, it is known that practising sport helps its prevention, so sport is considered to be more of an ally than an enemy. However, scientific evidence proves the role of the mineral chromium in the balance of blood sugar, as mentioned previously. The same is the role of the trace mineral selenium, another essential mineral, in the prevention of heart disease. Calcium and some co-factors play a huge role in bone and joint health, and mineral depletion is also linked to those diseases.

Additional considerations in the diet

Although I have explained briefly one reason we are getting a lower amount of minerals and vitamins through our diet, other contemporaneous factors are also relevant. There is a typical phrase that says: 'you are what you eat'; however, a more accurate phrase is: 'you are what you absorb'.

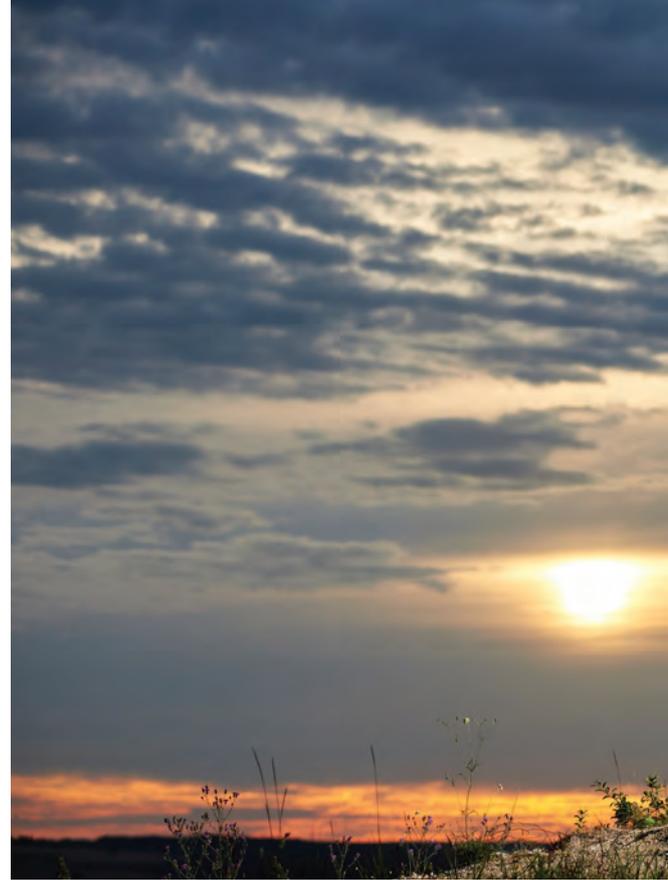
In the typical Western diet, we have a base of cereals and derivatives, most of which are derived from wheat. Wheat, barley and rye all contain gluten, an indigestible

protein for humans. The problem with gluten is that it destroys the intestinal villi, whose primary function is to increase absorption of nutrients in the large intestine. Ingestion of gluten can therefore lead to chronic inflammation not only in the intestine but, by crossing the epithelial barrier of the intestine, can cause inflammation in almost any other tissue in the body. This not only affects people who suffer from celiac disease; there is strong evidence that many people are sensitive to this protein without reacting to gluten serologic tests. This, without a doubt, keeps the immune system busy and overcharged as well as decreases the absorption of vitamins and minerals.

Not every person presents the same degree of sensitivity to gluten. However, studies show that whether or not patients report gastrointestinal symptoms, they later report an amelioration of them after switching to a gluten-free diet.

Vegetable oils are another important topic in today's diet that cannot be overlooked. Around 1910, vegetable oils began to appear as an alternative to lard and animal fats, promoting a healthier choice. With the passing years, these oils have been studied more and more. As they are high in polyunsaturated fatty acids, mainly omega-6, they may appear healthier, because omega-6 is one of the two essential fatty acids. However, for omega-6 to be considered healthy it needs to be in proportion to, or less than, omega-3 fats. Commonly the Western diet is very high in omega-6 and low in omega-3. Omega-6 fats in vegetable oils fuel your body's inflammatory pathways and also reduce the availability of anti-inflammatory omega-3 in our tissue, which results in further inflammation.

Another reason to stay away from vegetable oils is that they are hydrogenated, which is done to provide consistency. These oils are used in processed food, and this process makes them a very dangerous compound because the



Physically active people need more nutrients than average

chemical structure changes to trans fats. In fact, studies show that the high consumption of omega-6 fats, rather than consumption of natural saturated fats, is partially responsible for the rise in heart disease.

Another important subject is the consumption of sugar. Although sugar itself is not a problem, the amount of it is. The WHO recommends a daily sugar intake lower than 30g; however, the food industry has not made any effort to contribute to this task. For instance, an average adult in the United States eats 126g of sugar a day, in Germany 103g, United Kingdom 93g and Chile 58g. If we compare these numbers to the past, we can see that in 1822 the average American consumed 9g a day. The difference in these numbers is alarming and has had serious consequences on the health of modern man.

The sugar intake of such things as refined sugar, simple carbohydrates and high corn fructose syrup is able to cause glycation of proteins and fats which inactivate them and, as a result, obstruct their metabolic functions which are indispensable for optimum cell physiology. These compounds between sugar and proteins or fats are known as 'advanced glycation end' products (AGEs) and many



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The consumption of processed foods has boomed in the last few decades

studies demonstrate a correlation with an increase in oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, development of degenerative diseases and also damage to multiple systems in the organism.

As if this is not enough, cancer is a disease that has a common denominator. In all its forms, chronic inflammation has the ability to make the cancer more invasive and aggressive. A normal cell needs proteins, carbohydrates and fats to obtain energy, but a cancer cell just needs sugar for the same purpose. The intake of sugar triggers a massive release of insulin and growth factors (IGF-1), which stimulates inflammation and promotes directly the cell reproduction.

This is not the only mechanism by which the excess of sugar causes

damage. Sugar is also responsible for the depletion of minerals in an organism, mainly magnesium, chromium, copper and calcium. Once again, this is another factor that contributes to the shortage of minerals and, therefore, developing diseases from nutritional deficiency.

Preservation of food and sugar substitutes

Man’s evolution and the move to a more sedentary lifestyle has led to finding a way to have food throughout the entire year, and one discovery was that salt and condiments were able to preserve food to avoid decomposition. This brings us to processed food. There is, nowadays, a way to preserve foods that at one time would have

been lost through natural deterioration. This saves the food industry from natural foods rotting during preparation and enables fruit and vegetables to stay ‘fresh’ for longer periods of time. This industry has created different ways to keep canned and packed food fresh for months and even years, thanks to preservatives.

There have been many discussions about the safety of preservatives. The food industry and the FDA insist that they are safe. However, scientific research says the opposite. Preservatives such as sodium benzoate, potassium benzoate, calcium benzoate, benzoic acid, sodium sulphate, sodium nitrate and many others have been questioned. Not every preservative has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on health, but the ones listed above are example of the preservatives that do.

When it comes to sugar substitutes, we know that the food industry has presented some alternatives that are supposed to be healthier than sugar. Unfortunately, despite the fact that not all sweeteners have been shown to be compatible with health, they are widely used. Some examples of these dangerous sweeteners are aspartame (known for neurotoxic effects), acesulfame K (acesulfame potassium), sodium cyclamate, saccharine and others.

Conclusion

As we have evolved, our customs and nutritional habits have changed with us. Although today we have easier access to a wide diversity of natural and processed food, we have to consider that the number of essential nutrients that it contains are less than before. Processed foods have boomed in the last decades, making us accustomed to convenience, with little or no need to prepare food. But these foods are not a good source of nutrients and may have a harmful impact on a person’s health. Taking all these details into account, we are more prone to suffer from diseases or symptoms of nutritional deficiency, ▸

▷ insidious toxicity from the over-consumption of harmful preservatives and artificial sweeteners.

On the other hand, the intake of sugar has increased dramatically within our society. Scientific evidence clearly shows the systemic damage that this has caused with an increase of oxidative stress, formation of AGEs, depression of the immune system and depletion of minerals in the organism.

Homeopathy is a science-based form of healing through the Law of Similars. However, the symptomatology of each patient could eventually be confused by the addition of symptoms of nutritional deficiencies or toxicity of some compounds that occur in most processed food, making it more difficult to differentiate which symptoms are truly of the whole homeopathic picture of the patient and which are not.

The huge increase in chronic and degenerative diseases may not be exclusively linked to allopathic suppression. Bad nutritional habits, excess of sugar, simple carbohydrates, unsafe preservatives, artificial sweeteners, excess of omega-6 fats, and food without the proper amount of essential nutrients in the diet may play the main role in the development of these diseases. Avoiding the things listed above, and increasing the intake of essential nutrients through diet or good quality nutritional supplements, is a must in order to prevent diseases.

It would also be interesting to deepen the connection between the appearance of symptoms due to nutritional deficiency and the action of a homeopathic remedy reverting it.

It doesn't matter which medical practice is used – homeopathy,

As we have evolved, our customs and nutritional habits have changed with us

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allopathy or any other – I believe it is crucial that every doctor shares these facts with their patients and talks about the prevention of chronic diseases through diet.

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