

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Vitamin D Reduces COVID-19 Risks”

We have been told that coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a major pandemic and a leading cause of death worldwide. Currently, no drugs/vaccine is available for treatment. Future preventions and social distancing are the only ways to prevent this disease from community transmission. But Vitamin D is an important micronutrient and has been reported to improve immunity and protect against respiratory illness. A third wave of coronavirus (CoV) infections has swept the world and brought it to its knees. This new CoV infection (COVID-19) originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The causative agent for this respiratory illness is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2). This epidemic has a high infection transmission rate and in general, the direct cause of death is severe atypical pneumonia. The disease spread rapidly from the initial epicenter, Wuhan, to rest of the world and has become a pandemic. The main risk factors include pneumonia, acute kidney failure, acute heart failure. The global COVID-19 outbreak has placed devastating impact on every community. People with underlying health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and the elderly above 60 years are most susceptible to COVID-19. There is currently no treatment available although vaccine development is under progress. Our body's innate and adaptive immune system provides protection against viral infections and aids in regulating cytokine levels in young and elderly populations, respectively. Vit D has been widely implicated in enhancing the immune response and suppressing the cytokine storm. Its deficiency has been linked to increased susceptibility to viral infections. And it is hypothesized that correlations exist between vitamin D levels and susceptibility to COVID-19, and Vit D supplementation could decrease the risk and severity of COVID-19. Recent studies have found that hospitalized COVID-19 patients who were vitamin D sufficient, with a blood level of 25-hydroxyvitamin D of at least 30 ng/mL (a measure of vitamin D status), had a significant decreased risk for adverse clinical outcomes including becoming unconscious, hypoxia (body starved for oxygen), and death. In addition, they had lower blood levels of an inflammatory marker (C-reactive protein) and higher blood levels of lymphocytes (a type of immune cell to help fight infection). This study provides direct evidence that vitamin D sufficiency can reduce the complications, including the cytokine storm (release of too many proteins into the blood too quickly) and ultimately death from COVID-19.

In the America that I love, lack of successful treatment for COVID-19 leaves us with no choice but to take precautionary and prophylactic measures to stand a better chance to fight this pandemic. Hence, maintaining adequate Vit D levels is vital to prevent getting infected or to ward off the infection without mortality in case it occurs.

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