

The Effect of Functional Food on the Holistic Health of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Patients and the Quality of Life of Caregivers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To analyze the effects of added functional food on the physiological, mental and social health of Attention Deficit Hyperactive patients and the quality of life amongst their caregivers.

Methods: Forty six (46) children aged between 5 and 15, with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder diagnosed and treated at the Department of Child Psychiatry outpatient unit, were selected. The randomized, double-blind study included: Group A where existing treatments and doses were maintained with the addition of functional food; and Group B in which the existing treatment and doses were supplemented with a placebo made from rice flour. After a 6-week treatment program and assessment, Group B also received a 6-week functional food treatment and assessment. Using the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire, HoloLife Holistic Health Rating Scale and written and video interviews the effect of functional food on the physiological, mental and social health of Attention Deficit Hyperactive patients and the improved quality of life among their caregivers was assessed.

Results: A total of 40 patients (31 male, 9 female) completed the treatment and assessment; among the 21 patients from Group B, after 6 weeks of add-on placebo treatment, 19 received an additional 6-week functional food treatment and assessment. Twelve (12) of the 40 patients were treated with Concerta, 12 with Ritalin and 16 received no drug. Covariant analysis showed that, besides sleep ($F=3.34$, $P=.08$) and self-esteem ($F=3.06$, $P=.09$) which were on the edge of significance, significant effects were observed on the physical condition ($F=4.78$, $P<.05$), emotion ($F=14.1$, $P<.05$), perception ($F=7.44$, $P<.05$), learning condition ($F=7.16$, $P<.05$), language expression ($F=5.28$, $P<.05$), the quality of life among the major caregivers ($F=16.31$, $P<.05$) in Group A when compared to control Group B. The effect of the pre-existing (continued) drug treatment was insignificant. The improvement observed in Group A after 6 weeks included the physiological aspects: physical condition 26.71%, sleep 43.87%; mental aspects: emotion 34.07%, awareness 21.49%, self-esteem 20.59%; societal aspects: learning condition 13.34%, language expression 15.36%; and the quality of life among the major caregivers 3.2%.

Conclusion: The study found that additional functional food significantly improved the physical condition, emotions, perception, learning condition, and language expression of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Children. Although the levels of improvement for sleep and self-esteem were not as good as others, the outcome was still positive. The study also showed that, after the holistic health of the children improved, the stress on their major caregivers was reduced and their quality of life was also improved significantly.

Keywords: attention deficit hyperactivity, holistic health, quality of life, functional food