

Europe Ticker +++

Study by the German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ)

Can vitamin D help against cancer?

A study from the German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ) in Heidelberg has provided new insights into the relationship between vitamin D and cancer. The researchers found that vitamin D supplements may have a direct effect on mortality from serious cancer. According to this study, the intake of additional vitamin D may reduce cancer mortality, the DKFZ reports. The possible effects of vitamin D supplementation on the development and progression of cancer have already been investigated in several studies. In 2021, the DKFZ researchers analysed five trials. The results at the time were promising: based on a projection model, the mortality rate could be reduced by as much as 13 per cent. This would prevent the death of around 30,000 cancer patients in Germany alone. In the latest meta-analysis, the DKFZ team evaluated 14 trials of the highest quality level. The results were published in *Ageing Research Reviews* in 2023.

Source: DKFZ, Germany

Results of a British study

Teeth can preserve antibodies for centuries

Teeth can apparently keep antibodies intact for centuries. Scientists hope this will allow them to study the history of infectious diseases. In the latest study from the University of Nottingham and University College London, scientists have found that antibodies extracted from 800-year-old medieval human teeth are stable and can still recognise viral proteins. The antibodies still showed immunoreactivity against the (modern) Epstein-Barr virus. Study leader Prof. Robert Layheld and his team expanded the study of ancient proteins, known as palaeoproteomics. This allows experts to analyse how human antibody responses have evolved throughout history. For example, palaeoproteomics has already been used to recover and identify ancient proteins from the 1.7-million-year-old tooth enamel of an ancient rhinoceros.

Source: zm, Germany

The EU Commission has new plans

Digitisation of the yellow vaccination pass

The European Commission has confirmed plans to digitise the World Health Organization's (WHO) yellow vaccination pass. This is part of a WHO global digital health certification network based on the EU's digital vaccination records from the COVID-19 pandemic, wrote Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders and Commissioner for Health Stella Kyriakides. In June, the Brussels-based agency and the World Health Organization had announced a digital health partnership.

The WHO is implementing the certification network "to strengthen global preparedness against growing health threats", the Commission said at the time. To do this, WHO wants to adopt the system behind the EU vaccination or recovery certificates, including their principles and technology. "In this way, we will be able to respond more quickly when a new health threat emerges", the commissioners wrote.

Source: Die Zeit, Germany



Marketing of unhealthy foods

Norway bans advertising to children

In early June, Norway decided to ban advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children under 18, effective in 2024.

The Norwegian Dental Association (NDA) describes how the law came about:

The global trend towards increased obesity can also be felt in Norway, where one in five children is overweight or obese. "The health risks connected to this are finally being seen by our politicians, and we are very proud that Norway seems to be the first country to ban this marketing directed at children up to 18 years, as is the recommendation from the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)," said a speaker for the NDA in an interview to the World Federation of Dentists (FDI). "Over the past few years, we have seen an increased commercialisation of unhealthy food and drinks targeting adolescents and children. This pressure is mainly directed through social media channels." Channels where parents have little insight and little control. The new legislation could regulate and restrict this type of marketing.

Source: NDA, FDI

Dental care compatible with tourism

Portugal focuses on dental tourism

Dentistry is becoming the declared focus of medical tourism in Portugal. This is according to the Portuguese Dental Association, which encourages local dental clinics to become active in this field. "The 'Medical Tourism in Portugal' project aims to significantly increase the provision of medical services abroad and strengthen our country as a medical tourism destination of high clinical and technological quality," the Portuguese Dental Association (Ordem dos Médicos Dentistas, OMD) announced at the end of June. After initially focusing on cardiology, dermatology, oncology, rehabilitation, plastic surgery, otolaryngology and orthopaedics, it is now time to move on to dentistry. By 2025, Health Cluster Portugal (HCP) plans to allocate €100 million per year to the project. Together with the Tourism Board, the Chamber of Foreign Trade and the Association of Private Hospitals, HCP has created a portal to promote the clinics abroad.

Source: OMD, Germany

Clinical research

Many results published late or not at all

Clinical trials are often very demanding, can cost millions of euros involve human subjects. Ethical standards such as the Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association require that the results be published. A team from the Berlin Institute of Health (BIH), based at the Charité hospital in Berlin, Germany, has now published a web-based analysis in *PLOS Medicine* with data on trials involving 35 university hospitals—available since March at quest-cttd.bihealth.org. It included trials completed between 2009 and 2017. "The universities themselves have no idea what their situation looks like across all trials," said Daniel Strech of the BIH. Universities have become increasingly aware after they had to realise that they sometimes fail to meet their legal obligations; medical companies had long been doing much better at this.

The researchers wrote that transparency has increased over the years studied. "We have not found any negative developments," said Strech. According to the analysis, the university hospitals in Würzburg, Rostock and Saarland are leading in terms of the proportion of results published within five years of the end of the study. The hospitals in Dresden, Erlangen, Halle (Saale) and Aachen, where only about 50 to 60 per cent of the studies were published, came last. A spokesperson for Aachen University Hospital said that questions about transparency were justified: "The medical faculty encourages all researchers to publish results, and the ethics committee also reminds them to do so." In some cases, publications had taken a long time, and some studies had to be stopped because not enough volunteers could be recruited. According to the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, some of the study results were published later.

Publication is a scientific and ethical imperative, said a spokesperson for the Technical University of Dresden. All 18 clinical ongoing trials had the "goal of publication". But this takes time. Many studies would not be accepted at first, then new publication channels would have to be found. For trials on drugs and medical devices, where the standards are stricter, there are work instructions, for example, on how to write reports, he said. In addition, the local ethics committee requires researchers to submit a report on the results.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany

