THE USE AND THE EFFECTS OF HEALTH FUNCTIONAL FOODS AMONG GASTROINTESTINAL CANCER PATIENTS IN KOREA

Kim Dong Uk¹, Jang Aelee², Park SeunJa³
¹Pusan National University, Busan, Korea
²Youngsan University, Yangsan, Korea
³Kosin University, Busan, Korea

Introduction: As an adjunct to cancer treatment, the use of health functional foods (HFFs) seems to be increasing. However, little is known for the use and the effects of HFFs among cancer patients in Korea. The aims of this study were to investigate the exposure rate of HFF use among cancer patients and to evaluate the effects of HFFs.

Methods: A total of 216 patients diagnosed with cancer of esophagus (n = 20), stomach (n = 73), colon (n = 36), rectum (n = 9), liver (n = 30), pancreas (n = 22), and biliary tract (n = 26) were enrolled in this study. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using some questionnaires including HFFs, anxiety, depression, stress, and quality of life.

Results: Over a half of all the patient surveyed (n = 118; 54.6%) used HFFs. Patients who were younger, had higher income, or longer duration of disease showed a trend to use HFFs more frequently, even though the tendency was not statistically significant. The most commonly used HFF was vitamin complex (n = 35; 10.9%), followed by red ginseng (n = 26; 8.1%), and firefly wormwood (n = 25; 7.8%). The HFFs users demonstrated decreased anxiety (5.9 vs. 7.1; p = 0.049), depression (6.7 vs. 8.1; p = 0.017), and stress (20.9 vs. 25.0; p = 0.045) compared to the HFFs non-users. However, there was no significant difference between two groups in quality of life (54.3 vs. 51.0; p = 0.306).

Conclusion: HFFs may affect the emotional state of cancer patients, but not quality of life. A larger sample and size-controlled groups representing each cancer type will continue to be recruited for participation in this survey.