**ABSTRACT**

What is the effect of a Mediterranean diet on health outcomes in adults with coronary heart disease compared to adults not following a Mediterranean diet?

**METHODS**

The PubMed database was searched systematically using the keywords 'coronary heart disease' (or synonyms) and 'Mediterranean diet'. Both qualitative and quantitative data were accepted. Accepted qualitative data included participant mortality rates. Accepted qualitative data included reports of increases or decreases in mortality or risk.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria below were used to determine which articles to include in this review:

**RESULTS**

All 9 of the reviewed articles concluded that a Mediterranean diet had a beneficial impact on heart outcomes of patients with coronary heart disease. Of the 4 qualitative systematic reviews, 1 (25%) showed a reduction in mortality and 3 (75%) showed a reduction in the risk of developing coronary heart disease. Of the systematic reviews also reported other outcomes, such as the risk of developing other cardiovascular diseases, but these outcomes are not relevant to this review. Of the 5 qualitative cohort studies, 4 (60%) showed a reduction in mortality rates and 3 (60%) reported hazard ratios indicating a reduction in risk of developing coronary heart disease.

**DISCUSSION**

This review found that adherence to a Mediterranean diet is beneficial for adults with coronary heart disease.

A major limitation of this review is the inability to generalise to North American populations because the included articles only discussed the benefits in European populations. The systematic search and review methods used to identify and include high-quality longitudinal studies were a strength of this review. There were no major biases identified in the included articles. The excellency of the chosen database PubMed, adds to the strength of this review, but the use of only one database may have resulted in the inclusion of important articles. Although necessary, the inclusion and exclusion criteria engendered inherent weaknesses in this review. The exclusion of articles in a language other than English led to a foreign language exclusion bias in this review. Key foundational studies in this field were also excluded because they were published before 2004; but these studies were mentioned frequently in the included articles so their findings contribute to the conclusions of this review.

Current dietary guidelines such as Step 1 from the American Heart Association have shown to be less effective at reducing mortality and risk of developing coronary heart disease than a Mediterranean diet. Accordingly, the benefits of current dietary guidelines should be re-evaluated, especially these guidelines’ aversion to all types of fat. As mentioned previously, a Mediterranean diet is high in fat but still contributes to improved mortality and reduced risk.

Future studies on Mediterranean diets should continue to investigate the benefits of the types of fat consumed by Mediterranean populations. This review could be expanded to include all forms of cardiovascular diseases, not only coronary heart disease. In addition, if these suggested studies reveal benefits of a Mediterranean diet on all cardiovascular disease, the impact of this diet on other chronic diseases should be investigated.

**CONCLUSION**

According to this review, a Mediterranean diet is beneficial in adults with coronary heart disease. As such, health care practitioners should consider this diet when evaluating treatment and prevention options for their adult patients with coronary heart disease.

**References**