

26th World Nutrition Congress

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15th Euro Obesity and Endocrinology Congress

June 17-18, 2019 London, UK

Dietary supplements: State of knowledge and consumption among students in a North African University

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Introduction: Dietary supplements are widely well known in our societies and have a flourishing worldwide market. However, these products are not entirely harmless.

Methodology: The people's craze for dietary supplements and the absence of a specific regulatory framework for these molecules in Algeria were the motives for carrying out a cross-sectional survey based on a questionnaire, among the last grade students in: pharmacy, medicine and dentistry, in the faculty of medicine of the Djillali Liabes University; in order to study their consumption of dietary supplements and to evaluate their knowledge about these products.

Findings: Out of a total of 535 students solicited for this survey, 54.7% of them were consumers of dietary supplements. The results revealed that these young adults tended to consume different categories of dietary supplements, including: vitamins 56.8%, plants and their extracts 16.5% and minerals 8.6%, most often irregularly. The reasons for the consumption of these supplements were mainly: improving well-being 31.7%, filling deficits 30.3% or improving body appearance and performances 20.3%. It was also found that these dietary supplements were mostly dispensed in pharmacies through a prescription or on a medical advice (in nearly 60% of the cases). More than half of the students don't make a difference between dietary supplements and medicines and ignore their true definition. The majority of students surveyed ignore the risks associated with the misuse of these products (interactions with medications and contraindications). Nearly 16% of the students reported that they had side effects after taking dietary supplements (gastroenterological troubles 46.8% and allergies 29.8% etc). The Chi-Square Test demonstrated that there is no correlation between dietary supplement intake and the following factors: gender, physical activity, smoking status, healthy diet and health status.

Conclusion: For a secure use of dietary supplements, awareness programs must be organized among consumers and public health actors in order to guarantee a high level of safety. A stricter regulatory framework should also be established.

Biography

Amina Bayazid is a Lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy at Djillali Liabes University. After completing her degree in pharmacy at Ahmed Ben Bella University, she has done specialization in "Medical Hydro-Bromatology". Her research interests include: Nutritional epidemiology, knowledge assessment on the subject of Nutrition. Her current work focuses on the consumption of dietary supplements: Profile of consumers, Consumption patterns, Assessment of knowledge of the consumers, Risks of misuse, Side effects, regulatory framework etc. Moreover, she worked on Food Allergies and celiac disease. She has been an active member of the "Algerian Society of Nutrition" since 2013. She is also a Member in the Research laboratory in pharmaceutical development.

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