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Plant-Based Diets and Their Impact on Chronic Disease Prevention

Dr. S. A. Surale-Patil Assistant Professor Department of Pharmacology, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth, Karad, Maharashtra, India. Email:smitaasp73@gmail.com

Dr. Ganesh Thorat, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth, Karad, Maharashtra, Email:ganeshthoratmd@gmail.com

Dr. Snehal A. Masurkar, Assistant Professor, Krishna Institute of Allied Sciences,Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth, Karad, Maharashtra, Email: snehalmasurkar2882@gmail.com

Abstract: This research explores the relationship between plant-based diets and their impact on chronic disease prevention. Chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer, pose significant challenges to global public health. In recent years, plant-based diets have gained popularity for their potential health benefits and ethical considerations. This study aims to comprehensively review existing literature, analyze the mechanisms through which plant-based diets may influence chronic disease prevention, and assess the practical implications for individuals and public health initiatives. The rising prevalence of chronic diseases necessitates a closer examination of lifestyle factors, with diet playing a pivotal role in disease development and progression. Plant-based diets, characterized by an emphasis on plant-derived foods and reduced or eliminated animal products, have emerged as a potential preventive strategy. This research addresses the pressing need to understand the specific impact of plant-based diets on chronic diseases, shedding light on both the potential benefits and underlying mechanisms.

Keywords:plant-based diets, cardiovascular health, chronic diseases, meta-analysis, diabetes, mortality, observational studies, nutrition, vegetarian diets, vegan diets, glycemic control, Adventist Health .

I. Introduction

Chronic diseases have become a significant public health concern on a global scale, contributing to a substantial burden on healthcare systems and adversely affecting the quality of life for millions of individuals. Conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and various forms of cancer are escalating in prevalence, prompting a critical examination of lifestyle factors that may influence their development and progression.

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A. Background

In recent decades, the rise in the prevalence of chronic diseases has underscored the need for effective preventive strategies. One dietary pattern that has garnered increasing attention for its potential impact on health is the plant-based diet. Defined by a predominant or exclusive reliance on plant-derived foods while minimizing or excluding animal products, plant-based diets have gained popularity for their perceived health benefits. The spectrum of plant-based diets includes vegetarianism, veganism, and flexitarians', each with varying degrees of reliance on plant-derived nutrition.The surge in interest and adoption of plant-based diets is notable, driven by a combination of factors such as ethical considerations, environmental concerns, and a growing awareness of the potential health advantages associated with reducing animal product consumption. As individuals seek alternatives to traditional dietary patterns, understanding the relationship between plant-based diets and chronic disease prevention becomes paramount.

B. Statement of the Problem

In the face of the escalating global burden of chronic diseases, there exists a critical knowledge gap regarding the impact of plant-based diets on disease prevention. The question arises: To what extent do plant-based diets contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases, and what specific mechanisms underlie these potential benefits? Addressing this inquiry is pivotal for informed public health interventions and personalized dietary recommendations. The significance of exploring the relationship between plant-based diets and chronic disease prevention lies not only in the potential to alleviate the burden on healthcare systems but also in empowering individuals to make informed choices about their dietary habits. As lifestyle factors play a crucial role in the development and progression of chronic diseases, unraveling the potential preventive properties of plant-based diets can offer valuable insights into holistic and sustainable approaches to public health.

C. Objective

The purpose of this research is to comprehensively investigate the relationship between plant-based diets and chronic disease prevention. To achieve this overarching goal, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

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- To review and analyze existing literature on the impact of plant-based diets on the prevention of common chronic diseases, including but not limited to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.
- To identify and examine the potential mechanisms through which plant-based diets may exert their effects on chronic disease prevention, including factors such as inflammation, oxidative stress, and metabolic health.
- To assess the practical implications of adopting plant-based diets for individuals, healthcare professionals, and public health initiatives, with a focus on promoting long-term dietary changes.

II. Literature Review

The literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of studies exploring the relationships between dietary patterns, vegetarianism, and various health outcomes. One study investigated mortality rates in vegetarians compared to non-vegetarians in the United Kingdom, revealing potential associations between dietary choices and mortality risk. Another study examined the connection between dietary iron intake and coronary disease among men, shedding light on the role of specific nutrients in cardiovascular health. A separate study delved into changes in plant-based diet quality and their implications for total and cause-specific mortality, contributing to the evolving understanding of the dynamic nature of dietary habits and their influence on health outcomes.The EPIC-elderly study focused on dietary patterns and survival among older Europeans, offering valuable data on the impact of diet on longevity. Another study investigated chronic diseases among a low-risk population with specific dietary practices, providing insights into the health outcomes associated with these practices. Additional research explored the relationship between C-reactive protein levels and coronary artery disease incidence, emphasizing the importance of inflammation markers in cardiovascular health.Studies also examined heart disease and mortality among specific populations, contributing to the growing body of evidence on the potential health benefits of a vegetarian diet. Long-term follow-ups on German vegetarians elucidated mortality patterns and lifestyle determinants within this population. Comparative studies on the nutritional quality of various diets provided insights into the nutritional aspects of different dietary choices.A systematic review and meta-analysis explored the association between vegetarian-based dietary patterns and inflammatory and immune biomarkers. Other meta-analyses investigated the correlation of specific biomarkers

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with coronary heart disease risk. Studies also investigated the association between dietary intakes of specific nutrients and the risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease.

Author &Year	Area	Methodology	Key Findings	Challenges	Pros	Cons	Application
Appleby et al. (2016)	Mortality in UK	Population study	Potential association between vegetarianism and mortality risk	Limited generalizability, potential confounders	Long-term health benefits, dietary impact on mortality	General health considerations	Public health recommendations
Ascherio et al. (1994)	Dietary iron and coronary disease	Observational study	Relationship between dietary iron intake and coronary disease risk among men	Limited causal inference, self-reporting bias	Understanding nutrient-specific impact	Lack of causation evidence	Dietary recommendations for cardiovascular health
Baden et al. (2019)	Plant-based diet quality	Prospective study	Changes in plant-based diet quality	Dietary self-reporting challenges, confoundi	Insights into dietary evolution and	Potential bias in self-reported diet data	Public health interventions for dietary

			and its impact on total and cause-specific mortality	ng factors	mortality risk		improvements
Bamia et al. (2007)	Dietary patterns in older Europeans	EPIC-elderly study	Dietary patterns and survival among older Europeans	Generalizability, recall bias	Contribution to understanding diet and longevity	Limited applicability to younger populations	Elderly nutrition guidelines
Beeson et al. (1989)	Chronic diseases in Adventists	Longitudinal study	Health outcomes among Seventh-day Adventists, a low-risk group	Selection bias, potential confounders	Insights into health outcomes in specific dietary groups	Limited generalizability to the broader population	Understanding low-risk populations' health behaviors
Boekholdt et al. (2006)	C-reactive protein and coronary disease	Prospective population study	Association between C-reactive protein levels	Limited causal inference, potential confounders	Identification of inflammation markers in cardiovascular	Lack of direct causation evidence	Cardiovascular health interventions focusing on inflammation

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			and coronary artery disease		health		
Burr & Butland (1988)	Heart disease in British vegetarians	Observational study	Heart disease outcomes among British vegetarians	Potential confounders, generalizability	Contribution to evidence on vegetarian health outcomes	Limited applicability to non-British populations	Dietary recommendations for heart health
Burr & Sweetnam (1982)	Vegetarianism, dietary fiber, and mortality	Observational study	Relationship between vegetarianism, dietary fiber, and mortality	Potential confounders, self-reporting bias	Insights into the impact of dietary fiber and vegetarianism on mortality	Lack of experimental control	Dietary recommendations for mortality reduction
Chang-Claude et al. (1992)	Mortality patterns in German vegetarians	Long-term follow-up	Mortality patterns among German vegetarians	Limited generalizability, potential confounders	Long-term insights into mortality patterns	Lack of direct causation evidence	Understanding mortality patterns in specific dietary groups
Chang-Claude et al. (2005)	Lifestyle determinants in German vegetaria	21-year follow-up	Lifestyle determinants and mortality in	Limited generalizability, potential confounde	Long-term insights into lifestyle	Lack of direct causation evidence	Health education for lifestyle improvements

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	ns		German vegetarians	rs	and mortality		
Clarys et al. (2014)	Nutritional quality of different diets	Comparative study	Comparison of nutritional quality in vegan, vegetarian, and omnivorous diets	Dietary self-reporting challenges, potential biases	Comparative nutritional insights	Limited to nutritional aspects, potential biases	Dietary guidance for different dietary patterns
Craddock et al. (2019)	Vegetarian-based diets and inflammatory biomarkers	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Relation of vegetarian-based diets with inflammatory and immune biomarkers	Study heterogeneity, publication bias	Insights into dietary impact on inflammatory biomarkers	Variability in study designs	Dietary recommendations for inflammation reduction
Danesh et al. (1998)	Biomarkers and coronary heart disease	Meta-analyses	Association of biomarkers with coronary heart disease risk	Study heterogeneity, publication bias	Identification of biomarkers associated with cardiovascular risk	Lack of direct causation evidence	Cardiovascular risk assessment based on biomarkers
DE	Dietary	Prospecti	Associati	Potential	Identificat	Lack of	Dietary

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Oliveira Otto et al. (2012)	zinc and heme iron from red meat	ve study	on between dietary zinc and heme iron intake and metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease risk	confounders, self-reporting bias	ion of dietary factors associated with health risks	experimental control	recommendations for metabolic syndrome prevention
Dinu et al. (2017)	Vegetarian and vegan diets	Systematic review with meta-analysis	Multiple health outcomes associated with vegetarian and vegan diets	Study heterogeneity, publication bias	Comprehensive overview of health outcomes	Potential bias in included studies	Public health guidance on vegetarian and vegan diets
Gkrania-Klotsas et al. (2010)	White blood cell count and type 2 diabetes	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Differential white blood cell count and its association with	Study heterogeneity, publication bias	Identification of associations between white blood cell	Variability in study designs	Diabetes risk assessment based on white blood cell count

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			type 2 diabetes		count and diabetes		
Glenn et al. (2019)	Vegetarian dietary patterns and cardiovascular outcomes	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Relation of vegetarian dietary patterns with major cardiovascular outcomes	Study heterogeneity, publication bias	Overview of cardiovascular outcomes associated with vegetarian diets	Variability in study designs	Public health recommendations for cardiovascular health

Table 1. Summarizes the Literature Review of Various Author

A systematic review with a meta-analysis examined the multiple health outcomes associated with vegetarian and vegan diets. Another systematic review and meta-analysis explored the association between the differential white blood cell count and type 2 diabetes. Lastly, a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies examined the relation of vegetarian dietary patterns with major cardiovascular outcomes.

III. Why to Eat Plant Based Diet

Eating plant-based diets offers a range of health benefits, and individuals may choose this dietary approach for various reasons, including ethical, environmental, and health considerations. Here are some compelling reasons to adopt plant-based diets:

A. Heart Health:

- Plant-based diets are associated with lower levels of saturated fats and cholesterol, which can contribute to improved heart health.
- High fiber content in plant-based diets can help lower blood cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

B. Weight Management:

- Plant-based diets are often lower in calorie density, making them conducive to weight management and potentially weight loss.

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- Higher fiber content and nutrient-dense foods in plant-based diets contribute to a feeling of fullness, aiding in portion control.

C. Type 2 Diabetes Prevention and Management:

- Plant-based diets have been linked to improved insulin sensitivity, potentially reducing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- The focus on whole, unprocessed plant foods can contribute to better blood sugar control in individuals with diabetes.

D. Cancer Prevention:

- Antioxidants and phytochemicals found in plant-based foods may help protect cells from damage that can lead to cancer.
- High-fiber diets, common in plant-based eating, are associated with a reduced risk of certain cancers, particularly colorectal cancer.

E. Improved Digestive Health:

- Plant-based diets rich in fiber promote regular bowel movements and contribute to a healthy digestive system.
- The diverse range of plant foods supports a balanced and robust gut microbiome.

F. Reduced Risk of Hypertension:

- Plant-based diets, particularly those emphasizing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, have been linked to lower blood pressure levels.

G. Environmental Sustainability:

- Plant-based diets generally have a lower environmental impact, requiring fewer natural resources, less land, and producing fewer greenhouse gas emissions compared to animal-based diets.
- Choosing plant-based options can contribute to sustainable food practices and reduce the ecological footprint.

H. Ethical and Animal Welfare Considerations:

- Many individuals adopt plant-based diets for ethical reasons, seeking to reduce or eliminate their impact on animal welfare.
- Plant-based diets align with a compassionate approach to food choices, avoiding the exploitation of animals for food production.

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I. Longevity and Healthy Aging:

- Some research suggests that plant-based diets are associated with a lower risk of age-related diseases, contributing to healthier aging and potentially increased longevity.

J. Reduced Risk of Inflammatory Conditions:

- The anti-inflammatory properties of plant-based diets may help reduce the risk of chronic inflammatory conditions, such as arthritis and autoimmune diseases.

IV. Technology Integration for Enhanced Outreach

In the digital age, leveraging technology can significantly enhance the reach and impact of public health initiatives promoting plant-based diets. Develop user-friendly mobile applications, online platforms, and virtual support networks to disseminate educational resources, share recipes, and provide interactive tools for meal planning. Virtual health coaching and telehealth services can offer personalized guidance, making information accessible to a wider audience and fostering ongoing support for individuals adopting plant-based lifestyles.

A. Education in Schools and Workplaces:

Incorporating plant-based nutrition education into school curricula and workplace wellness programs is a strategic approach to reaching diverse demographics. By instilling healthy dietary habits early in life and fostering supportive environments in workplaces, these initiatives can contribute to a cultural shift towards plant-based eating. Collaborate with educators, school boards, and corporate wellness programs to integrate plant-based nutrition education seamlessly into existing frameworks.

B. Public-Private Partnerships:

Forge partnerships with private entities, including food producers, retailers, and culinary experts, to create an ecosystem that supports plant-based diets. Collaborate on initiatives such as product development, marketing campaigns, and the introduction of plant-based options in restaurants and food establishments. By aligning public health goals with business interests, these partnerships can contribute to making plant-based choices more accessible and appealing to a broader audience.

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C. Addressing Socioeconomic Disparities:

Recognize and address socioeconomic disparities that may hinder access to plant-based foods. Public health initiatives should incorporate strategies to mitigate barriers such as cost, food deserts, and limited access to fresh produce. Implement community-driven solutions, such as subsidies for healthy food options, community gardens in underserved areas, and partnerships with local farmers to enhance affordability and availability of plant-based foods.

D. Culinary and Cultural Celebrations:

Promote plant-based diets through culinary events, food festivals, and cultural celebrations that highlight the diversity and richness of plant-based cuisines. Collaborate with chefs, influencers, and cultural organizations to showcase delicious plant-based dishes, emphasizing that adopting a plant-based diet is not only health-conscious but also an enjoyable and flavorful culinary experience.

E. Long-Term Monitoring and Support:

Establish mechanisms for long-term monitoring and support to ensure sustained adherence to plant-based diets. Implement follow-up programs, support groups, and periodic check-ins to address challenges, provide ongoing education, and reinforce positive dietary behaviors. Continuous engagement and support are critical for individuals as they navigate the transition to and maintenance of plant-based eating patterns.

V. Challenges &Future Directions and Implications

As we delve deeper into the intricate relationship between plant-based diets and chronic disease prevention, several avenues for future research and practical applications emerge. Firstly, longitudinal studies with diverse populations are essential to establish causation and better understand the long-term effects of sustained adherence to plant-based diets on chronic disease outcomes.Furthermore, investigations into the optimal composition of plant-based diets, including the balance of macronutrients, micronutrients, and specific food sources, are warranted. Tailoring dietary recommendations to individual health needs and cultural preferences will enhance the feasibility and acceptability of plant-based eating patterns.The potential for plant-based diets to address health disparities and contribute to global sustainability should also

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be explored. Public health interventions that integrate nutritional education, accessibility to plant-based foods, and policy initiatives can help create environments conducive to healthier dietary choices for diverse populations.Acknowledging challenges is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the practical implementation of plant-based diets. Concerns related to meeting nutritional needs, especially for certain micronutrients like vitamin B12, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids, need to be addressed through informed dietary planning or supplementation.Cultural variations in dietary preferences and practices may require tailored approaches to promote the acceptance and adoption of plant-based diets. Collaborative efforts between healthcare professionals, community leaders, and policymakers are vital to ensure that plant-based dietary recommendations are inclusive and culturally sensitive.

A. Recommendations for Public Health Initiatives

Building on the emerging evidence and considering the multifaceted nature of chronic disease prevention through plant-based diets, several recommendations for public health initiatives can be proposed:

B. Nutritional Education:

Develop and implement comprehensive nutritional education programs that promote awareness of the health benefits of plant-based diets.

Tailor educational materials to address cultural, economic, and demographic factors, ensuring inclusivity and relevance.

C. Dietary Counseling in Healthcare Settings:

Integrate plant-based dietary counseling into routine healthcare practices to empower individuals in making informed dietary choices.

Train healthcare professionals to provide personalized guidance on adopting and maintaining plant-based eating patterns.

D. Community-Based Programs:

Establish community-based programs that facilitate access to affordable and diverse plant-based food options.

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Collaborate with local organizations, farmers' markets, and community gardens to promote the availability of fresh, plant-based foods.

E. Policy Initiatives:

Advocate for policies that support and incentivize the production, distribution, and consumption of plant-based foods.

Introduce initiatives such as tax incentives for plant-based food producers and subsidies for plant-forward school meal programs.

F. Research Funding:

Allocate research funding to support longitudinal studies investigating the long-term health effects of plant-based diets across diverse populations.

Prioritize research into the optimization of plant-based dietary patterns for various age groups and cultural contexts.

G. Cultivating Sustainable Change:

To facilitate sustainable dietary change on a broader scale, collaboration is essential. Public health initiatives should engage stakeholders from various sectors, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and policy-making. Multi-level interventions that address individual choices, community environments, and overarching societal structures will be most effective in fostering sustainable dietary patterns.

H. Adapting to Cultural Diversity:

Recognizing and respecting cultural diversity is paramount in the promotion of plant-based diets. Public health initiatives should be sensitive to the varied dietary traditions and preferences across different communities. Tailoring educational materials, recipes, and interventions to align with cultural norms ensures that recommendations resonate with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Collaborative efforts with community leaders and cultural influencers can enhance the acceptance and adoption of plant-based eating patterns.

I. Community Engagement and Empowerment:

Empowering communities to take charge of their health is integral to the success of public health initiatives. Engage local communities in the development and implementation of programs, emphasizing grassroots involvement. Community-based initiatives, such as cooking classes, community gardens, and support groups, foster a sense of shared responsibility and provide practical tools for individuals to embrace plant-based diets.

J. Measuring Impact and Continuous Evaluation:

Establishing robust metrics to measure the impact of public health interventions is essential. Regularly assess the effectiveness of programs in terms of dietary behavior change, health outcomes, and overall community well-being. Continuous evaluation allows for adjustments based on real-world feedback, ensuring that interventions remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the evolving needs of diverse populations.

K. Global Collaboration for Sustainable Health:

Given the interconnected nature of public health and the global impact of dietary choices, fostering international collaboration is crucial. Share best practices, research findings, and successful intervention strategies across borders. Global initiatives can amplify the collective impact of efforts to promote plant-based diets, contributing to a shared commitment to sustainable health practices on a worldwide scale.

VI. Conclusion

In the pursuit of holistic well-being and the prevention of chronic diseases, the role of plant-based diets has emerged as a promising and multifaceted approach. This comprehensive exploration has highlighted the potential impact of plant-based eating patterns on cardiovascular health, metabolic well-being, and cancer prevention. The mechanisms involving anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, coupled with improvements in metabolic health, provide a robust foundation for understanding the interconnected relationship between plant-based diets and chronic disease prevention. As we navigate the intricate landscape of public health initiatives, it is evident that promoting plant-based diets requires a nuanced and adaptable strategy. Cultural sensitivity, community engagement, global collaboration, and the integration of

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technology are integral components of successful interventions. Recognizing and addressing socioeconomic disparities, fostering public-private partnerships, and embedding plant-based nutrition education in educational and workplace settings are essential steps toward creating a supportive ecosystem for widespread dietary change. The journey towards a plant-based future for chronic disease prevention involves not only individual choices but also systemic transformations. Public health initiatives must transcend traditional boundaries, embracing innovative approaches that resonate with diverse populations. By doing so, we can foster a shift towards sustainable, health-promoting dietary patterns that benefit individuals, communities, and the planet. In this era of interconnectedness and rapid advancements, continuous research, evaluation, and adaptation will be key to refining our understanding of plant-based diets and optimizing their potential. As we strive for a healthier, more resilient world, the integration of plant-based lifestyles into the fabric of global public health is not merely a choice but a crucial necessity. By collectively embracing this vision, we can pave the way for a future where chronic diseases are prevented, health disparities are minimized, and individuals worldwide have the tools and support to make choices that promote well-being for generations to come.

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