

2nd Session

Preventive aspects of food use

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Prospective studies offer the unique opportunity to investigate simultaneously across many disease endpoints which of the foods and combination of foods are associated with risk. In prospective studies, normal subjects without diseases are invited to give information about lifestyle, allow medical examination, and give blood. To estimate habitual diet in the past, food use over the last year is requested. After this baseline examination, all study participants are followed for many years regarding the occurrence of incident diseases. In the EPIC-Potsdam Study, recruitment was conducted from 1994 to 1998, and 27,548 study participants from the city of Potsdam and surrounding area decided to join this study. The answered questionnaires about dietary habits and lifestyle were examined for anthropometry and blood pressure, and blood aliquots were stored in liquid nitrogen. In several waves, these study participants received questionnaires for update of lifestyle information and occurrence of diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, myocardial infarction, stroke, and cancer. In the EPIC-Potsdam Study, about 10 years of follow-up are now covered. In this time period, we observed about 1,000 cases of new type 2 diabetes and cancer, and about 250 cases of myocardial infarction and stroke.

Several food groups are consistently related to risk in this and other prospective studies and are candidates for prevention: fruits and vegetables, wholemeal grains, and meat and meat products. Among beverages, coffee and alcoholic beverages are affecting risk. These food groups also appeared to be key factors when food patterns are formed and analysed. In the presentation, examples of the association between food use and risk of chronic diseases will be shown.

Heiner Boeing



Heiner Boeing, Ph.D. and MSPH, was born July 15, 1953 in a small village, located in Westphalia in the western part of Germany. He studied nutrition at the universities Kiel and Gießen, and started to work in the field of cancer epidemiology at the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg. He was one of the first being sent to the United States by a federal programme for training in epidemiology. With the two academic degrees in nutrition (Ph.D. 1985 in Gießen, Germany) and in epidemiology (Master of Science in Epidemiology from UCLA, USA) he was in an excellent position to develop nutritional epidemiology further. As post-doc at the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg, he was involved in the first steps to establish a large European cohort on cancer and nutrition. After having moved to the German Institute of Human Nutrition, Potsdam-Rehbrücke in 1993, he established the Potsdam part of the EPIC-Study with 27,500 study participants. Since 1996, he is heading the Department of Epidemiology. His major interest is devoted to the role of diet, anthropometry, and other lifestyle factors, such as physical activity, for risk of chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes, CVD, and cancer. One of his research directions is devoted to foods and particular to food patterns in relation to disease risk.