No secular trend in vitamin D levels over the past 30 years in Swedish children

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Aim

We hypothesized that the increased indoor activities and obesity in recent years would contribute to decreased vitamin D levels in children and adolescents. The present study provided long-term follow-up of vitamin D levels in a large group of children referred over 30 years for growth evaluation.

Background

The importance of vitamin D for skeletal health is well established and many recent reports indicate that vitamin D deficiency is linked to chronic diseases. Vitamin D status is defined by serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D (25(OH)D), and although there is no consensus on optimal levels of 25(OH)D concentrations of 50 nmol/L (20 ng/mL) meet the requirements in 97.5% of the population. Sunlight is limited in Sweden (latitude 55–69) during October–March resulting in a marked seasonal variation. Supplementation is recommended in Sweden during infancy.

Patients and Methods

Serum 25(OH)D was analysed between 1982-2013 at GP-GRC from 2048 Swedish children (mean age ± SD, 8.59 ± 3.68 years; 1197 boys). 25(OH)D was determined with the IDS-iSYS 25-Hydroxy Vitamin DS automated chemiluminescence immunoassay. Studies of decades-old sera have revealed that 25(OH)D is stable.

Results

No trend for decreased vitamin D levels over time was found, with median 25(OH)D levels of 58.4 nmol/L, 95% CI 29.0–96.3 (Figure 1). We found a significant association with age, i.e., younger children had higher 25(OH)D levels, possibly due to the general supplementation of vitamin D recommended for Swedish infants (Figure 2).

Above 125 nmol/L, n=15 (1%); 100-125 nmol/L, n=88 (3%); 75-99 nmol/L, n=377 (18%); 50-74 nmol/L, 884 (43%); 25-49 nmol/L, n=641 (31%); below 25 nmol/L, n=63 (3%).

Conclusions

• No secular trend in vitamin D levels was found in this unique study over 30 years in more than 2000 Swedish children.
• These results broaden our understanding of the public health relevance of vitamin D and could be of value for future cost–benefit analyses in preventive healthcare.

References: