

Vitamin B6 - What Next?

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It is usually agreed that Vitamin B6 is essential for health. Heard & Munroe¹ report that 89% of patients suffering from Multi-Chemical Sensitivity are functionally deficient in Vitamin B6. Currently a good number of women use quite high doses of Vitamin B6 bought over-the-counter for PMT and morning sickness. However, Jeff Rooker, the Minister concerned with food, plans legislation to restrict Vitamin B6 in supplements to 10 mg, allowing 50 mg to be sold by pharmacists with higher doses on prescription by doctors. This action is being taken on the advice of the Food Advisory Committee and the Department of Health Committee on Toxicity. The H.C.T. base their advice on the 1987 Dalton Report:

Problems with the 1987 Dalton Report

Most symptoms reported in the Dalton trial such as bone pain, shooting chest pain, and loss of libido, are simply not part of the consistent picture of B6 toxicity reported by other researchers. The most common symptom reported by Dalton leg muscle weakness was found in almost half of the patients taking B6. Yet, B6 toxicity does not cause muscle weakness or pain in other published trials even at doses up to 7,000 mg per day.^{2,3}

Problems with the 1985 Dalton Report

Dalton's earlier report of B6 toxicity included headache, tiredness, depression, bloatedness, irritability and puffy eyes. None of these symptoms reflects classic B6 toxicity and except for two cases subjectively reporting fatigue and irritability when B6 was first started⁴ none of these symptoms has been reported by other researchers. All but one of the symptoms reported by Dalton were more likely to occur than neuropathies. Yet, neuropathy is the only problem consistently linked to B6 toxicity. Clearly, what Dalton's patients were suffering from was not B6 toxicity.

The Gaby Analysis of the Dalton Trial

The American expert in the clinical use of vitamin B6, Dr. Alan Gaby, has said 'the methodology of (the Dalton Report) is so deficient that no reasonable conclusions can be made about alleged B6 toxicity.'⁵ Gaby reminds us that many of the symptoms that Dalton has linked to B6 are 'not uncommon symptoms, particularly among women who suffer from PMS... Just because someone with these symptoms happens to be taking B6 does not suggest a diagnosis of pyridoxine toxicity... In summary, Dalton has failed to demonstrate the existence of a neuro-toxicity syndrome due to moderate doses of vitamin B6.'⁵ Others have criticised the Dalton report, saying that it 'unfortunately lacks measurable data relating to sensory neuropathy.'⁶

The Principal Report on Toxicity

In the New England Journal report of seven cases of B6 toxicity that remains the major evidence supporting toxicity in humans, 'none experienced symptoms at doses below 2 g per day.'² This is 40 times the dose reported by Dalton. Moreover, all the symptoms were sensory losses not the symptom picture reported by Dalton and Dalton alone.

The Situation to Date

Because of the reaction to the proposed legislation the matter was referred to an Agricultural Select Committee. The Agricultural Select Committee criticised strongly the advice given to Jeff Rooker, stating plainly that it was against the weight of the scientific evidence available and suggesting a limit of 100 mg in line with that prevailing in the USA. However, the Minister does not have to accept the recommendations of the Agricultural Select Committee, and a preparation of the Statutory Instrument continues. Therefore, it is most important that pressure is maintained on the Government through letters to MPs and Ministers to ensure that people of this country are permitted to purchase Vitamin B6 as freely as our cousins in the USA.

Further details can be obtained from The Maperton Trust (reg'd charity no. 327683) an educational charity concerned with the holistic approach to health. Write to: The Maperton Trust nr. Wincanton Somerset BA9 8EH, UK. Telephone: 01963 32651. Fax: 01963 32626.

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References

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