Country Foods Health Benefits in a Changing Canadian Arctic

Summary

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To survive in the Arctic, Inuit had for centuries to rely on fish, mammals and some plants such as wild berries and seaweeds. However, since the 1990’s, the consumption of country food has decreased markedly, and the rapid food transition towards a western diet has led to excessive intake of sugar, salt and trans-fatty acids. Global environmental changes also disproportionately affect Inuit dietary patterns in many ways including the availability of local animal and plant species and/or the concentration of environmental contaminants. Once thought to be protected from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, the current dietary and lifestyle transitions combined to the severe food insecurity context occurring in the Inuit population of Nunavik may change the situation in the near future. The traditional country food diet in Nunavik is very rich in key protective nutrients such as omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and selenium. Wild berries, seaweed and other plants found in Nunavik may also provide plant-derived nutrients and secondary metabolites that also offer unique potential for the prevention or treatment of metabolic disease and associated cardiovascular complications and to offset some deleterious effects of environmental contaminants exposures. With a better understanding of the overall benefits of nutrients present in the different country foods consumed in Nunavik, we can better develop community-based interventions and public policies aiming at improving country food consumption and food security, promote Inuit culture and youth empowerment, minimize the risks from environmental contaminant exposure and the emergence of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in this population and across the Arctic.

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Publications

Articles Published in Refereed Publications


Noël, M., Dewailly, E., Chateau-Degat, ML., Counil, É., Laouan-Sidi, EA., Lonn, E., 2012, Cardiovascular risk factors and subclinical atherosclerosis among Nunavik Inuit, Atherosclerosis, 221(2), 558-64, Published

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Other Refereed Contributions

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Noël, M., Dewailly, E., Chateau-Degat, ML., Counil, É., Laouan-Sidi, EA., Lonn, E., 2012, Cardiovascular risk factors and subclinical atherosclerosis among Nunavik Inuit, Atherosclerosis, 221(2), 558-64, Published

