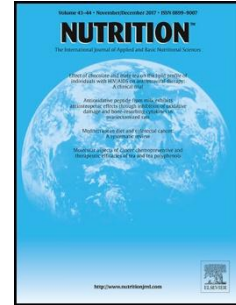


Accepted Manuscript

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Author: Cecilia Gavazzi, Sabina Sieri, Francesca Traclò, Alessandro Sproviero, Giulia Vandoni, Roberta Ricci, Silvia Stragliotto, Vittorina Zagonel, AIOM-SINPE-FAVO working group



PII: S0899-9007(18)30256-9
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nut.2018.04.002>
Reference: NUT 10189

To appear in: *Nutrition*

Received date: 7-3-2018
Revised date: 5-4-2018
Accepted date: 8-4-2018

Please cite this article as: Cecilia Gavazzi, Sabina Sieri, Francesca Traclò, Alessandro Sproviero, Giulia Vandoni, Roberta Ricci, Silvia Stragliotto, Vittorina Zagonel, AIOM-SINPE-FAVO working group, Changes in food habits in cancer patients in Italy: a survey AIOM – SINPE - FAVO, *Nutrition* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nut.2018.04.002>.

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Changes in food habits in cancer patients in Italy: a survey AIOM – SINPE - FAVO

Cecilia Gavazzi¹, Sabina Sieri², Francesca Traclò³, Alessandro Sproviero⁴, Giulia Vandoni¹, Roberta Ricci⁴, Silvia Stragliotto⁵ and Vittorina Zagonel⁵ for the AIOM-SINPE-FAVO working group*

1 Clinical Nutrition Unit, National Cancer Institute, Milan, Italy;

2 Epidemiology and Prevention Unit, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Milan, Italy;

3 Italian Federation of Volunteer-based Cancer Organizations, Rome, Italy;

4 DATAMINING S.r.l., Rome, Italy;

5 Medical Oncology 1, Veneto Institute of Oncology-IRCCS, Padova, Italy.

Corresponding Author: Cecilia Gavazzi MD, Clinical Nutrition Unit, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale Tumori, Milan, Italy email: cecilia.gavazzi@istitutotumori.mi.it

Keywords

Cancer patients, Cancer survivors, Dietary changes, Food habits' survey, Nutrition information

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cancer patients seem to be very attentive to diet related information
- More than half of patients change food habits during cancer treatment
- Patients' reason for changing are: healthier diet, cancer sites, side effects
- Major changes reflect some indications for cancer prevention
- Nutrition intervention specific for cancer sites and treatment are lacking

Abstract: Objectives: This survey aimed at investigating the prevalence of cancer patients changing diet in relation to cancer site, gender, age and geographic distribution. Furthermore, we intended to explore the rationale behind dietary changes and to identify sources of information in order to plan specific educational training.

Patients and Methods: Patients aged ≥ 18 years, who accessed the AIMaC information points were invited to participate. An ad hoc self report questionnaire was used. The questionnaire enquires about major food groups changes. A minimum sample of 100 patients for the most common cancers was planned. 1257 questionnaires were analysed. Prevalence, reasons and type of dietary changes were assessed. Logistic regression was used to analyse the main determinants of dietary changes.

Results: 705 patients (56.1%) reported changes since diagnosis. On the logistic regression analysis age and tumour site were significantly associated to dietary changes $p < 0.001$, mainly in ages below 50 and upper gastrointestinal cancer. 50.8% of patients change to adopt a healthier diet, 31.3% to deal with eating-related side effects and 17.9% due to cancer sites. Regardless of the reasons for changing, the most common food items which decreased were alcohol, red meat, processed meat and sugary drinks. Only 15% of patients received specific nutrition indication.

Conclusion: Italian patients are attentive to the importance of diet during cancer treatment. Personal choices reflect some indications for cancer prevention as there is still a shortage of guidelines for a correct diet, during treatment. Nutrition indications are rarely given within the oncologic centre.

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