



FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS AND VITAMINS FOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is which factors influence the choice of food supplements in students. Methods: survey; statistical processing of results; grafical analysis; comparative analysis. The respondents are 83 students - 43 women and 36 men. Results: The majority of students (76%) do not use food supplements and only 24% is the relative share of positive answers. The largest (40%) is the relative share of respondents who rely on their own knowledge when choosing supplements. Fitness instructors (20%) and nutritionists (18%) have almost equivalent weight as an authority. The doctor's recommendation does not have a strong influence on the choice of supplements - 13% is the relative share of this answer Conclusion: A small number of students use nutritional supplements, and those who use them rely mainly on their own knowledge and to some extent on fitness instructors and nutritionists. Measures should also be proposed to increase health literacy of the medical specialists themselves - doctors, physiotherapists, rehabilitators, nurses, midwives and others, and in this way the human and financial resources in the health system would be significantly affected.

Key words: food supplements, students, health culture, vitamins, education, diet

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the benefits of nutritional supplements has been gaining more and more discussion recently. There are data from the European Association of Manufacturers of Self-Healing Products (AESGP), that the market of the over-the-counter medications in Bulgaria in recent years has grown by between 5.59 and 18.8% on an annual basis in 2015 and occupies about 30% share of the pharmaceutical market. All this requires consideration of the factors and motives that determine the choice of these products. The role of medical professionals is especially important, as they should prescribe or

recommend a specific nutritional supplement. The importance of patients' health culture is also decisive. In order to have the maximum effect of the supplementation, compliance with the optimal intake conditions is required according to Bozhkova, A., (2009). B. Minkova, M. Rohova (2018) study the motives and preferences of consumers of food supplements and indicate some basic motives in their choice. According to these authors, pharmacists' recommendations for certain supplements largely depend on the good results shared by patients. Health culture and personal choice play a crucial role in a healthy lifestyle and behavior and should be the subject of new research. People with high health literacy enjoy better health and well-being, while those with lower skills tend to engage in riskier behaviors.

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METHODS

The aim of the study is to establish which factors influence the choice of nutritional supplements for students.

To achieve this goal the following tasks are set:

1. Study of literature sources.
2. Development of a questionnaire.
4. Processing and analysis of the data from the conducted survey.
5. Graphic analysis

The study was conducted at the Medical College at the Thracian University in Stara Zagora, during the 2018/2019 school year, using direct anonymous surveys. The respondents are 83 students - 43 women and 36 men. For the needs of the research a questionnaire was compiled to

study the opinion of the students. It includes questions aimed at gathering the following information:

- Influence of authority, expert or free choice in the use of nutritional supplements.
- Do they have information about the importance and benefits of nutritional supplements and what are the most commonly use.

RESULTS

The analysis of the results shows that it has an influence on some factors. The majority of students (76%) do not use nutritional supplements and only 24% are the relative share of respondents who use supplements and this is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

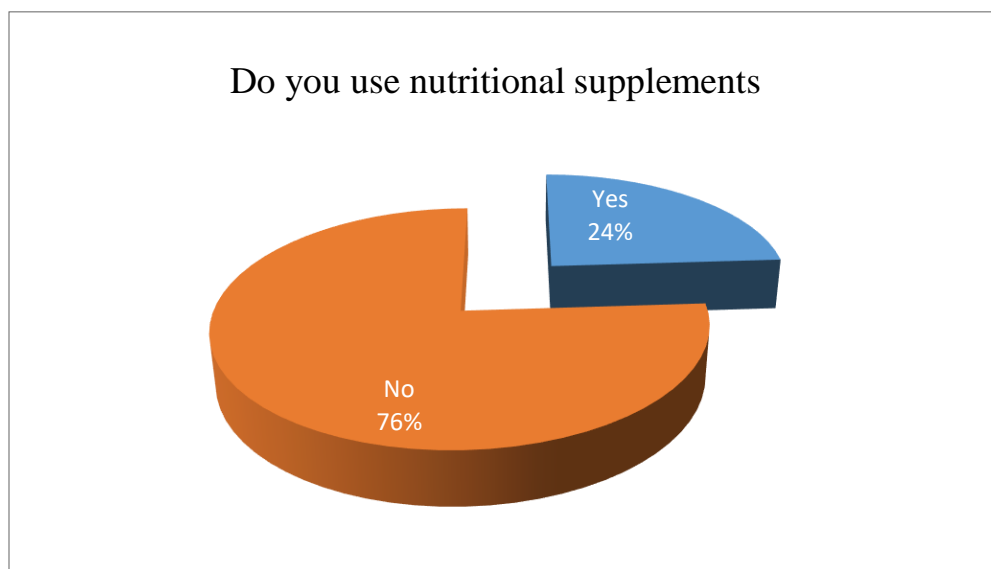


Figure 1. Answer to the question "Do you use nutritional supplements?"

Figure 2 illustrates the relative proportions of the answer to the question "How do you choose food. It is clear that the largest (40%) is the relative share of respondents who rely on their own knowledge when choosing supplements. Fitness instructors (20%) and nutritionists (18%) have almost equivalent weight as an authority, and this is observed in the calculated relative shares of these answers. It turns out that the doctor's recommendation does not have a strong influence on the choice of supplements - 13% is the relative share of this answer. Sharing the results of taking

nutritional supplements in a friendly environment has an impact on some of the respondents, which is evident in the relative share of this answer - 9%.

According to Plamen Petkov, who conducted a study at the Thracian University in 2018, a very large part of the surveyed students uses nutritional supplements, seeking information mostly from a fitness instructor. He points out that 33.10% seek information from a fitness instructor, 25.90% from friends, 21.70% from the Internet, 17.50% from books, 1.80% from

another source and 67.70% of respondents answered that they currently use nutritional supplements, 20% have not used and do not want to use, 12.50% have a desire and intention to use nutritional supplements, and 9.80% have used before. The same author points out that 80% of

trainee students have used, use or wish to use nutritional supplements, 75% of women use nutritional supplements and 85% of men use them.

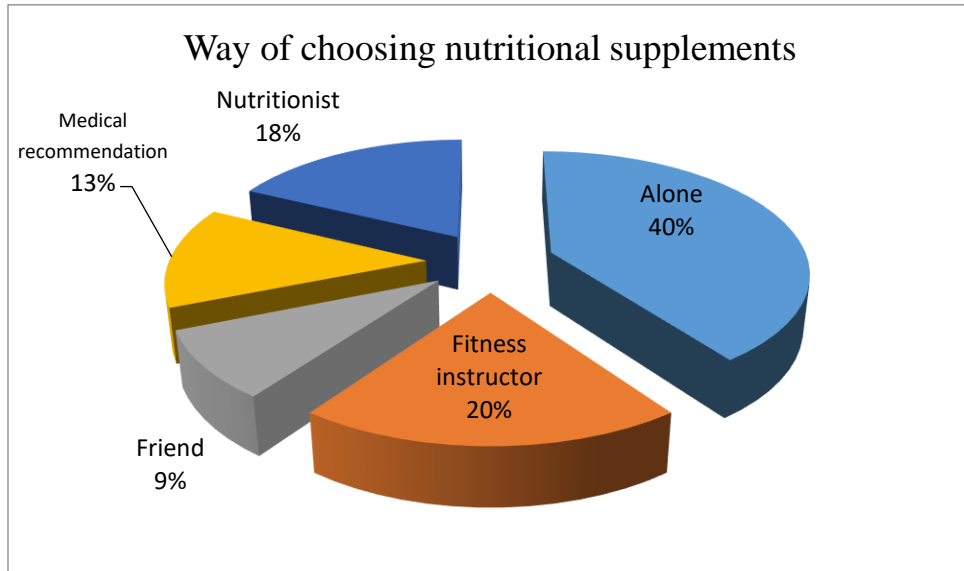


Figure 2. Answer to the question "How do you choose nutritional supplements?"

In our study it becomes clear that the most commonly used amino acids, proteins, vitamins, of which vitamins B is specifically mentioned,

omega 3 fatty acids and L-carnitine are also preferred (**Figure 3**).

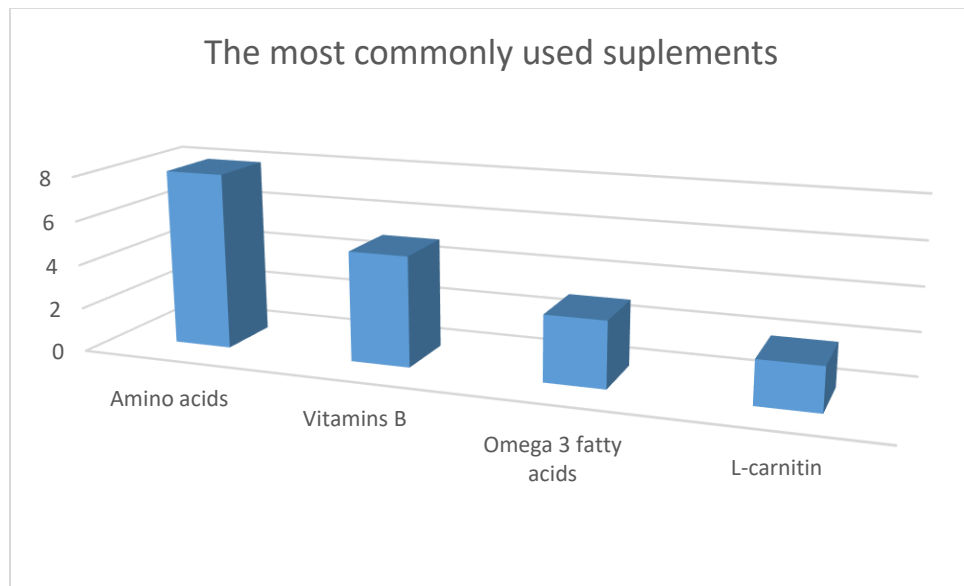


Figure 3. Answer to the question "What nutritional supplements do you use?"

In 2012, Galina Dyakova researched the preferences for choosing nutritional supplements for students. This author points out that 14.6% of the surveyed students and 3.4% of the female students use nutritional supplements. The same study provides information on the type of supplements used - male students indicate folic acid, protein, amino acids, L-carnitine, creatine and vitamins, and female students indicate only vitamins.

CONCLUSION

A small part of students uses nutritional supplements, and those who use rely mainly on their own knowledge and to some extent on fitness instructors and nutritionists.

Measures should be proposed to increase health literacy of the medical professionals themselves - doctors, physiotherapists, rehabilitators, nurses, midwives and others, and thus would significantly affect the human and financial resources in the health system.

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