

Healthcare professionals support milk and dairy foods

At the invitation of The Dairy Council, health care professionals and nutrition experts came together recently in London to discuss milk and dairy foods and their link with cardiometabolic disease. The event was used to launch The Dairy Council's new initiative '*Saturated Fat, Dairy and Cardiometabolic Health*'. In presenting some of the latest scientific evidence on saturated fat, dairy, heart disease and type 2 diabetes, the aim was to clear up the confusion that currently exists among healthcare professionals and consumers.

There are legends of myths that blame milk and dairy foods for a variety of ailments. Speaking at the event, Dr Anne Mullen, director of nutrition at The Dairy Council, said: "It is often thought that milk and dairy foods, due to their saturated fat content, can play a part in developing health problems such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes". However, as was explained in the meeting, during the last decade much scientific evidence has been produced that shows there is no significant association between milk and dairy foods and the risk of developing heart disease and dairy type 2 diabetes; on the contrary, some studies have even shown protective effects.

A surprising outcome of a recent study by University College Dublin was that people who ate the greatest amount of cheese did not have higher cholesterol levels, one of the main risk factors for heart disease, compared to those who ate the lowest amount of cheese. That result turns on its head the old widely held belief that eating foods high in saturated fats, like cheese, can increase the risk.

During the event, delegates considered the new research in relation to the current public health recommendations which target milk and dairy foods, in order to reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The majority of healthcare and nutrition experts present did not agree with the current public health guidelines (81% in a vote) and they also agreed that milk and dairy foods were inversely linked to cardiometabolic disease.

All that sounds like very good news for the dairy industry, which continues to go through very difficult times. The challenge now is to get the message out to consumers, especially young people, not forgetting ill-informed journalists. For more information on this new resource, contact The Dairy Council at www.milk.co.uk

JOHN SUMNER
sumner_john1@sky.com
22/03/17

