Letters to the Editor

Soy Isoflavone Consumption Is Not Associated with Increased Risk of Advanced Prostate Cancer

In Response: Based on our findings, we reported that "positive associations were seen between isoflavones and advanced prostate cancer" in the abstract and that "isoflavone intake tended to be associated with an increased risk of advanced prostate cancer" in the summary of the discussion because we considered that this unemphatic expression accurately reflected the lack of statistical significance in the data. However, our choice of words might have led to a misunderstanding and the perception of exaggeration.

In our study, only the consumption of miso soup showed a statistically significant positive association with the risk of advanced prostate cancer. This result may be explained by chance finding or misclassification of miso (fermented soypaste) consumption because of variation among individuals in the amount of miso consumed in miso soup. If the observed positive association was in fact causal, it might be explained by the high amount of aglycones in miso. Isoflavones are present in the soybean primarily as glycosides (genistin and daidzin), which are estrogically inactive, but the glycosides are converted during the fermentation of soybeans to iso to aglycones (daidzein and genistein), which are estrogically active (1). Miso soup, thus, contains higher levels of aglycone than other soy foods, and our finding that only miso soup was positively associated with advanced prostate cancer is unsurprising.

We are puzzled by Bosland and Gann’s suggestion of errors in our risk estimates. Table 5 shows the results after exclusion of screening-detected prostate cancer. The number of advanced cases is the same as in Table 4 because no advanced cases were detected by screening. If the number of subjects changes (in this case, by exclusion of screening-detected cases), it is hardly surprising that the value of quartile cutoffs also changes.

We do not consider that fears over popular misinterpretation should stand as a barrier to the presentation of good science when prudently expressed and suitably published. We trust that Bosland and Gann agree.

Norie Kurahashi
Motoki Iwasaki
Shizuka Sasazuki
Tetsuya Otani
Manami Inoue
Shoichiro Tsugane
Epidemiology and Prevention Division, Research Center for Cancer Prevention and Screening, National Cancer Center, Tokyo, Japan

References

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doi:10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-07-0689
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Norie Kurahashi, Motoki Iwasaki, Shizuka Sasazuki, et al.

Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 2007;16:2169.

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