



Total Diet Studies: What they are and why they are important ⁱ

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Abstract

The protection of the food supply from chemical hazards must be considered one of the most important public health functions for any country. However, these hazards are usually only manifested as illness and death after long-term, low-level exposure to the contaminant. Similarly, nutritional hazards (both excesses and deficiencies) are often difficult to recognize because of the delayed onset of symptoms. In this regard, total diet studies are the most cost-effective tool for assessing dietary exposures to a range of potentially hazardous chemicals and intakes of essential nutrients and preventing the occurrence of disease. An overview of total diet studies will be provided, including comparison with other types of surveillance programs. The importance of total diet studies in assuring the safety of the food supply and identifying possible health risks will be described.

ⁱ Extract from Total Diet Studies. Moy GG and Vanoort R eds, Springer, New York (September 2013)

About the speaker

Dr. Gerald G Moy has had a long career in food safety, first a consumer safety officer with the US Food and Drug Administration in Washington, DC and finally as Senior Food Safety Scientist with the World Health Organization in Geneva. From 1987 to 1991, he served as the Regional Food Safety Adviser for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Kuala Lumpur. As manager of the GEMS/Food Programme in WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Dr Moy was responsible for the exposure assessment of chemicals in food and in particular total diet studies. After his retirement from WHO in 2008, he has continued to provide advisory services and training to governments and development agencies on a range of food safety issues. He has co-edited two books – Total Diet Studies (Springer, 2013) and Food Safety Encyclopedia (Elsevier, 2014) to which he contributed a number of chapters. He co-authored a recent publication related to food safety interventions in the home in developing countries (US AID, 2015) and contributed a chapter on food and water protection during mass gatherings (WHO, 2015). He is the co-chair of the Food Safety Committee of International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) and has contributed numerous articles to IUFoST publications, including food safety implications of the Ebola epidemic (Scientific Information Bulletin, 2014), groups especially vulnerable to hazards in food (IUFoST SIB, 2015) and whistleblowing in the food industry (World of Food Science, 2015). He is an adviser to the Chinese Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment, the World Food Program, the WHO Virtual International Advisory Group on Mass Gatherings and the German Total Diet Study. He also administers a website on total diet studies (totaldietstudies.org). He is a Fellow of the IUFoST International Academy of Food Science and Technology.