



# Concurrent introduction of a Mediterranean Diet in several bavarian hospitals of the German Network of Health Promoting Hospitals

Eder, Siegfried  
Jäck, Rüdiger  
Rustler, Christa

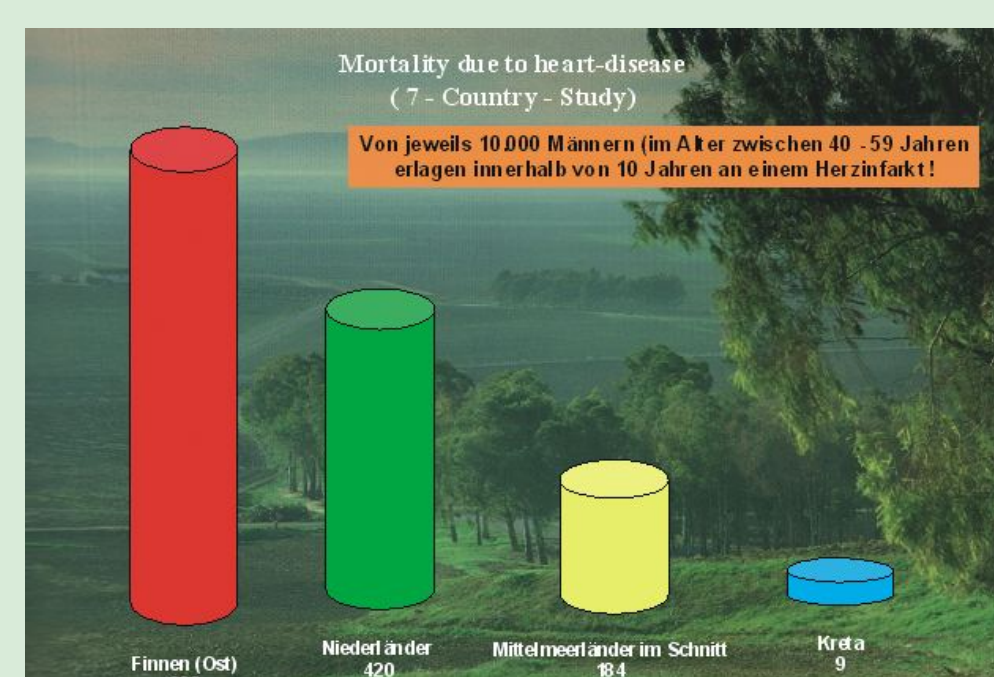
Caritas Krankenhaus St. Josef  
Klinik am Regenbogen  
Deutsches Netz gesundheitsf. KH

Regensburg  
Nittenau  
Essen

Hildebrandt, Ulrich  
Jungbauer, Jose  
Wüchner, Gerald

Klinik St. Irmingard  
Krankenhaus der Barmherzigen Brüder  
Krankenhaus Rothenburg

Prien  
Regensburg  
Rothenburg odT.



## The Seven Countries Study and the Lyon Diet Heart Study

The first clinical-trial evidence of reduction of cardiovascular mortality with the Mediterranean diet came from the Lyon Diet Heart Study in the 1990s. In the study, patients after a myocardial infarction had a 70 percent mortality reduction through a diet comparable with the food of the population of Crete in the 1950s. The concept of the Mediterranean diet originated from the Seven Countries Study in the 1950s. The study showed that, despite a high fat intake, the population of the island of Crete had very low rates of coronary heart disease and certain types of cancer, and had a long life expectancy. (SEE FIGURE)

## It all started at the St. Irmingard hospital

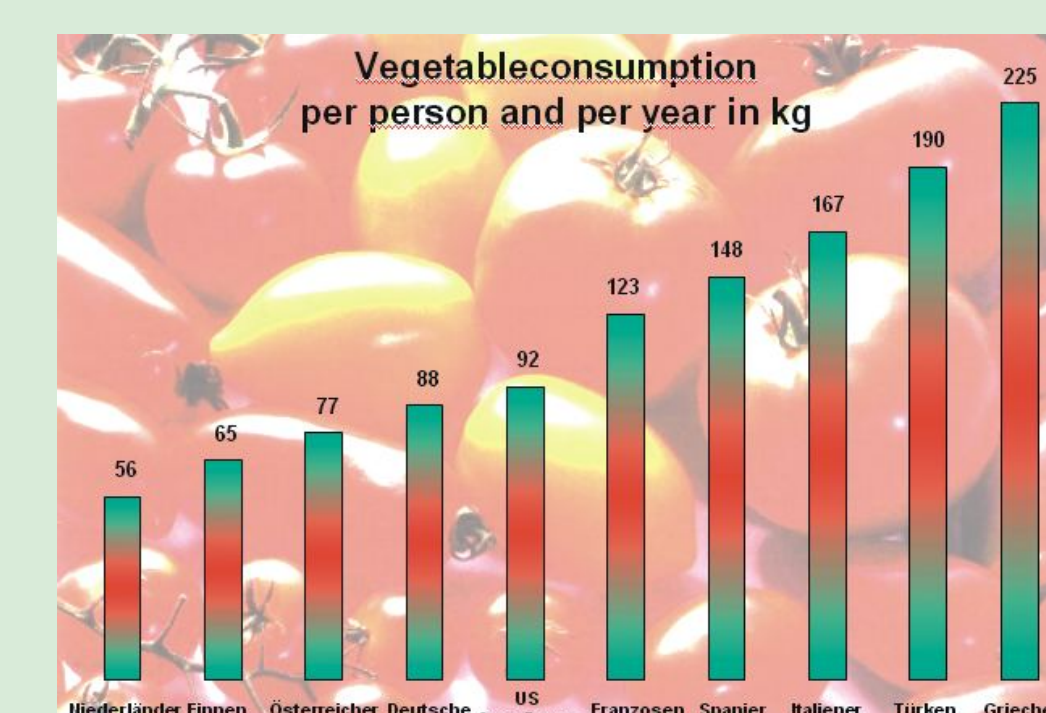
Due to the favorable effects, it is appropriate to also offer the Mediterranean diet in hospitals. In July 2003 the St. Irmingard Hospital therefore introduced a Mediterranean menu as a second daily choice in addition to the standard menu. Since the Bavarian food with its large share of meat and few vegetables is in great contrast to the Mediterranean diet, careful planning was necessary, with training for the kitchen staff and numerous informational meetings for the clinic employees and patients. The introduction was then so successful and enjoyed such acceptance from patients and employees that in October 2003 the kitchen staff won second place among 70 participating hospitals in the competition of the Bavarian State Ministry for Environment and Health: "Essen Pro Gesundheit" (Food for Health).

The St. Irmingard Hospital also published a comprehensive guide for the patients with information and numerous recipes, and established a cooking school. Patients and their families can also learn to cook the Mediterranean diet at heart-lifestyle-training-weeks that the hospital offers in a Bavarian monastery and in a hotel on Crete.



## What is special about the Mediterranean diet or Crete diet (with the "LOOGO" to help remember)?

- L more fish and less meat
- O fats with mainly oleic acids (= simple unsaturated fatty acids; primarily in oliveoil, rapeseed oil, and nuts)
- O (Obst) lots of fruits, which contain protective secondary plant substances
- G (Gemüse) lots of vegetables, with more legumes
- O omega-3 fatty acids (primarily in cold-saltwater fish like salmon, mackerel, herring ..., also in walnuts, rapeseed oil, green leafy vegetables ...)



## A concurrent introduction in several hospitals

Together with Gerald Wüchner, who was the first kitchen manager in Germany to successfully introduce the Mediterranean Diet in the Rothenburg Hospital, the St. Irmingard Hospital motivated other hospitals in the German Network of Health Promoting Hospitals to introduce the Mediterranean diet. After founding a working group and after a planning and preparation time of approximately half a year, the Barmherzigen Brüder Hospital, the Caritas Hospital St. Josef in Regensburg, and the Klinik am Regenbogen in Nittenau introduced the Mediterranean diet in April and May 2004. The kitchen managers and staffs of the participating hospitals showed themselves to be quite creative and imaginative in the development of very attractively designed information sheets and menu cards and in the realization of event-days.

There has been much positive initial response from patients and employees. In order to evaluate the introduction of the Mediterranean diet, a survey of all patients and employees at the participating hospitals was begun at the end of May in cooperation with the Technical University of Munich.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the German Network of Health-Promoting-Hospitals in September 2004, the kitchen managers of the participating hospitals will jointly plan the lunch with the Mediterranean diet as motto.

This project is particularly suited to emphasize the concept of the health promotion as a common goal.

## Advantages of a Mediterranean diet in the hospital

The Mediterranean diet is recommended for the prevention of cardiac-circulatory disorders and tumor diseases by all national and international medical societies. The benefits of a changeover to a Mediterranean diet have already been proven in several internationally recognized studies. The advantage of the Mediterranean diet is that it makes superfluous many formerly propagated and not particularly popular diets. Most people can be easily motivated by the Mediterranean diet, since they link it to very positive associations: the Mediterranean, sun, vacation, and enjoyment. With this project, something can at the same time be done for health promotion for the patients and the staff as well as for visitors.



## Results and Conclusions:

- Through the simultaneous implementation of a health-promoting project in several hospitals, the contents gained greater significance within the hospital as well as among the public.
- Other social agencies for health education and health insurance companies have also shown great interest in this project, so that, amongst other things, joint cooking courses for patients and their partners after the hospital stay are planned supraregionally with the community colleges in Bavaria.
- Despite frequent expectations to the contrary, it could be shown in the participating hospitals that it is possible to offer a Mediterranean diet without additional costs.
- Through this easily described project, outsiders can get a better idea of the goals of the German Network of Health-Promoting-Hospitals.
- The Mediterranean diet has enjoyed great acceptance by staff and patients.

