

Vitamin History, The Early Years - Lee Mcdowell

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Casimer Funk 101 years ago first used the term "vitamine" in 1912. What were later to be known as vitamin-deficiency diseases, such as scurvy, beriberi, night blindness, xerophthalmia and rickets, had plagued the world at least since the existence of written records. Records of medical science from antiquity attesting to human association of certain foods(e.g. liver) with either the cause or prevention of diseases are considered the nebulous beginnings of the concept of these essential nutrients. The concept of a vitamin or "accessory growth factor" was developed in the early part of the 20th Century and for almost five decades there was an exciting era of isolation, identification and synthesis of the vitamins. The present book contains 10 chapters and methodically traces each vitamin from an unidentified factor to its discovery and synthesis. In relation to history of nutrition, vitamins are by far the most interesting class of nutrients. Following the clues of the existence of each vitamin is similar to a good mystery story. The early beginnings of the vitamin theory relate to reports that animals did not survive on diets of only carbohydrates, fats, protein and salts. Beriberi was the earliest documented deficiency disorder (2697 B.C.). High incidence of beriberi in Asian countries was due to over milling rice(polished rice). The subsequent research in this disease led to the discovery of vitamins and helped to establish some of the principal features of deficiencies in general. Vitamin A deficiency results the in two eye diseases of night blindness and xerophthalmia. According to some of the oldest records, liver cured these diseases. Rickets, the devastating bone disease of young children is a vitamin D deficiency. The vitamin is referred to as the "sunshine vitamin" as it can be synthesized in the body. Rickets was common in northern cities and was more rampant in industrial cities as industrial pollution prevented children from sunlight exposure. Pellagra, a niacin deficiency, is a devastating disease that brought pain, suffering and death and resulted when corn was the main food source. Symptoms of the disease were referred to as the 4 D's, dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia and death. Scurvy which had been feared since ancient times resulted from diets devoid of vitamin C-rich foods of fruits and vegetables. Scurvy was the vitamin deficiency disease that caused the most death and suffering in recorded history. A fatal anemia, pernicious anemia, was a vitamin B-12 deficiency. The disease resulted by only consuming plant foods, or lack of a factor produced

by the stomach needed for absorption of the vitamin. The book contains pictures of very serious consequences and magnitude of vitamin deficiency diseases. Likewise, the book contains levity by illustrating humorous situations on causes and cures of these diseases. The purpose of the present publication is to present an in depth review of the early history of vitamins to illustrate the devastation of these diseases and also provide some levity. Author Bio: The author of the book, Dr. Lee McDowell is a nutritional professor at the University of Florida. In nutrition research he has published over 1500 scientific articles and has written 7 books. Five different nutrition courses have been taught, with a graduate vitamin nutrition course offered over 25 years. During this time period he wrote two editions of a vitamins textbook for his graduate class and for courses at other universities. Dr McDowell is a "Fellow" of two International Societies and has won many awards in teaching and research. From one society he won the highest award available for research (Morrison Award). Internationally Dr. McDowell is well known having made 271 different country visits since 1971. He has given over 500 major talks in 42 different countries. "Early Vitamin History", presented in a humorous way, is his most favorite topic. Author: McDowell, Lee
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