The energetics of food and nutrition according to traditional Chinese medicine

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Nutrition and healthy eating is often composed of a balanced diet rich in proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and other nutritional components. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, not only should diet contain foods rich in vitamins and minerals but the energetic properties of foods such as flavor and movement are fundamental to a healthy balanced diet. Indispensable to the theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine are the energies of foods, which offer a balance of warm and cool energy. Yin is associated with cold, dark and passive properties while yang is composed of heat, light and active properties. A healthy lifestyle is eminent on the properties of a balanced yin and yang constitution. Food and nutrition in Traditional Chinese Medicine is composed of diet, medicine, nourishment and avoidance. Food can either assist or hinder our daily efforts of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. When referring to foods which are either hot or cold, the reference is not based on the temperature of foods but rather the measure of the effect on our metabolism after initial digestion. Cold foods provide low energy and help to balance hot foods. A healthy combination of both cold and hot foods creates an internal balance. The different food groups are based according to the energetic properties of Yin (cool, cold) Yang (warm, hot) and Neutral. Consumption of either too many hot or cold foods will thus create an imbalance, which results in ailments. Overconsumption of foods, which are “hot” in nature, may cause an individual to feel overly warm, anxious and suffer from constipation. In contrast, overconsumption of foods, which are “cold” in nature will cause the individual to feel overly cool, experience weakness and may suffer from diarrhea. Different foods in accordance to their temperature properties can directly influence one's health, for example, in an individual suffering from rheumatism, warming foods such as garlic can help to alleviate pain. Eminent to the energetics of food are the five flavors of food, pungent, sweet, bitter, sour and salty. These flavors can directly affect the internal organs in accordance to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory. An example is fresh ginger or peppercorn and its “pungent flavor”. Pungent flavor has a direct effect on the stomach and as a result will circulate and stimulate appetite. All the different flavors and its direct influence on the body and its respective Chinese Medicine organs will be discussed as well. Along with the energetic flavor and energetic properties of foods is the energetic movement of foods. There are four aspects of movement classification of food in Chinese Medicine. These movement properties of food are lifting, floating, lowering and sinking. An example of a food, which has a “sinking” property, is vinegar. Vinegars “sinking” property causes an inward movement and helps to slow down bowel movements and relieve abdominal distention. In conclusion, practitioners attending the presentation on the energetic properties of food and nutrition will have a broad knowledge on the energetic property, movement and flavor of foods and its respective effect on the body. They will be able to apply this knowledge, and aid individuals in making not only healthy food and nutrition choices but be able to choose foods, which contain balanced energetic properties for their body constitution.

Development of database on functional foods and ingredients from agrifood

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Objective: As dietary patterns and life style change is increasing the prevalence of chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. A reference data is not enough to provide information about the functionality of the local agrifood ingredients. This information is needed for researchers in food science and nutrition, food manufacturers, regulatory authorities and dieticians.

Materials & Methods: It collected 205 foods such as local specialty foods, Korean foods of frequent consumption and flavonoid rich sources. The local agrifood to develop a database on the functional food ingredients was evaluated on healthy effects such as anti-inflammation, antithrombotic effect and hepato-protective effect.

Results & Significance: The database includes information on food, functionality, experimental biomarkers and results and functional component. It contains food names with different descriptors related to food type, plant part and scientific names. Healthy effects of food were reported whether or not a significant difference in effect results. The information of phytochemical in food is included as analysis and literature review. It should help researchers to easy search the functional food, and food manufacturers to develop personalized healthy foods. We currently developed a comprehensive database on healthy effects in foods as well as content of phytochemical including flavonoid.