Background – Diminished taste acuity as an early symptom of zinc deficiency has been demonstrated in animals and humans. A number of trials have also documented hypogeusia in association with low zinc in patients with a variety of aetiologies and in ‘healthy’ individuals in different life-stages, while others have failed to demonstrate such a correlation. Diagnosis of hypogeusia in these studies has been based on a range of chemical gustometry designs and more recently electrogustometry techniques.

Objectives – To identify the preferred methods of zinc assessment used by Australian naturopaths.

Design – Questionnaires were sent to 205 naturopaths regarding their zinc assessment methods.

Outcomes – A response rate of 57% was achieved. A taste acuity test proposed by Bryce-Smith in 1984 was the primary method of zinc assessment in 80% of respondents with only 4% not ranking this method in their top three assessment tools. The use of hair mineral analysis was also prevalent with 30% of naturopaths identifying this as their second preferred method. Other methods reported with lower frequency include kinesiology, plasma zinc, live blood analysis and electro-dermal screening.

Conclusion – The preliminary data suggests that the ‘zinc taste test’ is overwhelmingly the most frequently employed method for zinc assessment by naturopaths and is used in combination with clinical assessment but independent of any other biochemical index for zinc.

Reference

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