IODINE DEFICIENCY IN THE UK

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Introduction

Following a national survey of 14-15 year old schoolgirls (1) the UK is now considered to be mildly iodine deficient (Fig 1). There is also evidence that pregnant women in the UK are iodine deficient (2,3) which may have significant negative implications for the neurocognitive development of their children.

To publicise this situation a meeting was held in the Royal College of Pathologists in June 2012, under the auspices of the BTA and BTF and ICCIDD with financial support from ICCIDD and the Society for Endocrinology (Fig 2). It was noted that the UK is now in the top ten iodine-deficient countries worldwide in terms of numbers of iodine-deficient school-age children (Fig 3).

During the meeting, data presented from the ALSPAC survey in Bristol (4) suggested that urinary iodine status in pregnancy is correlated with IQ and reading ability in the offspring at ages 7-9 years.

The meeting concluded with the unanimous recommendation that a national strategy be developed to manage this public health problem (5).

The correction of iodine deficiency is ideally obtained by improving the iodine supply to the population. This is usually achieved by the use of iodised salt at the household level in addition to ensuring that food manufacturers use iodised salt. Currently in the UK less than 5% of available salt for domestic use is iodised. (6) More than 50% of the 15 year old schoolgirls in the survey had urinary iodine concentrations less than 100 microgrammes/litre (7). Further, during the national survey of iodine deficiency disorders in England, it was noted that the UK is now in the top ten iodine-deficient countries worldwide in terms of numbers of children with insufficient iodine intake (based on national median UIC of ≤100µg/L) with the greatest numbers of school children with insufficient iodine intake in 2011. Reproduced with permission from the IDD Newsletter, Global Update, p 3, Feb 2012

Conclusion

The UK is iodine deficient. We require advocacy in government agencies to improve iodine nutrition in the UK.

The UK Iodine Status Strategy Group

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References

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Figure 1: More than 50% of the 15 year old schoolgirls in the survey had urinary iodine concentrations less than 100 microgrammes/litre

Figure 2: Iodine Deficiency in the UK – The Way Forward.

Presentation titles