



The use of protein supplementation among fitness center attendees. The protein project

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Letter to Editor

Nowadays, in a gym context we may find three people among ten who declare protein supplements consumption. Health, physical fitness, self esteem, performance and muscle hypertrophy are usually the main reasons inducing such kind of consumption. It well documented that particularly active individuals use supplements to build muscle, gain strength or prevent future diseases and illnesses. Furthermore, scientific researchers have shown that in general people have different opinions about the use of supplements and the appropriate food to eat. As reported by Bianco and colleagues in 2011, proteins are the most widely ingested supplements in people attending commercial gyms and supplement users also ate higher protein content foods in respect to those who did not supplement.

It is clear that there is an increased interest in what is considered “proper” nutrition and what is the best nutritional strategy to optimize exercise training workouts. Dietary behaviour is in fact a complex phenomenon; food-based approaches are regarded as the long-term strategy for improving nutrition. These require significant efforts and appropriate planning in order to include certain specific macronutrients or supplements in everyday’s diet. Dieting or unhealthy eating practices, (such as eating foods deemed as “bad” by the dieter), in one way or another, may be associated with long-term weight gain.

Previous studies have shown discrepant rates of supplement intake amongst subjects that exercise in gyms. These different findings might be explained by different gyms and people enrolled. Probably an under or over-

reported use of such supplements, or an incorrect knowledge of what is considered a supplement may lead to such results. As mentioned before, proteins are the most widely consumed supplement in commercial gyms, although association of protein supplements and food consumption is a poorly researched field. It is to date unclear whether those more inclined to supplement also have healthier dietary patterns. As shown by Pechey and colleagues in 2010, socioeconomic status is another factor influencing the quality of food intake, highlighting that low socioeconomic status people usually purchase a greater proportion of unhealthy foods and beverages. Conversely, high socioeconomic status people purchase greater proportions of fibres, proteins and total sugars, and smaller proportions of sodium.

The Author with this letter wants to point out the importance of epidemiological studies able to cover the lack knowledge that at this moment is present on this field. The common questions are: 1) Who is taking protein supplements nowadays? 2) There are enough information about? Within commercial gyms?

Personal Trainers and Fitness Instructors are enough qualified to prescribe supplements? Are proteins really necessary to obtain results? Which kind of association is the most favourite in case of protein consumption?

In this context falls the Protein Project PP (www.proteinproject.com). The PP is a scientific project of ten years duration (2011-2021) leaded by the University of Palermo in collaboration with many partners from all of the world. It is composed by three different epidemiological studies: Study A) Population Target - Commercial Gym attendees, Study design, Face-to-face interview; Study B) Population Target - Commercial Gym attendees, Study design, Self Reporting Questionnaire; Study C) Population Target - Net Surfers Study design, Self Reporting Online Short Questionnaire.

The main purpose of this project is to monitor the use of protein supplementation, alone or in association with other supplements amongst regular fitness center attendees. Moreover, Authors are interested in sources of information, dietary behaviour, quality of training and quality of life of people who are attending commercial gyms (appendix a).

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Research Unit ID _____

Date _____

ID Participant _____

Age (yrs) _____ Sex (m/f) _____ H (cm) _____ W (kg) _____ Education (yrs) _____

1. Do you practice any physical activities? YES NO
2. If yes! What kind of activity are you practicing? _____
- 2.1 Since when (years)? _____
3. How many days per week? _____
4. How many hours per day? _____
5. Please type all places you practice physical activities _____

<p><i>Note:</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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6. Are you using protein supplements? NO Yes
- 6.1 If not, have you ever used them in past? (even if only once, answer yes) NO Yes
- 6.2 If yes, which? (if possible, Brand / Trademark) _____
- 6.2.1 Since when (months/years)? _____
- 6.2.2 How many days per week? _____
- 6.2.3 What kind (per day)?

<i>Protein Bar</i>	<i>Whey/Egg/Mix Protein</i>	<i>Protein drink</i>
nr _____	gr _____	ml _____

*Mainly mixed with
Water or Milk*



6.2.4 Are you taking protein supplements in association with (e.g. Creatine, Amino Acids, Weight gain, Weight loss, Vitamins, Anabolic Steroids, ecc...)?

Please type here _____

6.2.5 Who suggested you their use:

- Coach
- Myself, it was my idea
- Internet, Web
- Physician
- Nutritionist
- Friends

Other: _____



7. Are you following any specific food regimen ? NO Yes

If yes, please type the name here _____

8. Frequency of use of the following foods:

Milk	days/week	___	___
Cheese	days/week	___	___
Chicken / Turkey	days/week	___	___
Eggs	days/week	___	___
Vegetables	days/week	___	___
Bakery	days/week	___	___
Cold cuts	days/week	___	___
Yogurt	days/week	___	___
Meat	days/week	___	___
Fish	days/week	___	___
Nuts	days/week	___	___
Snacks	days/week	___	___
Canned tuna	days/week	___	___
Legumes	days/week	___	___

9. Are you able to jog nonstop for 50 minutes?

- Yes
- No
- I have never tried

10. Report time spent sitting during a typical day (for study purposes, work purposes or study and work purposes)

- 1-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-8 hours
- 8-10 hours
- > 10 hours

(No weekend or holiday)