



Is chocolate good for the heart? An evidence-based review

O chocolate faz bem ao coração? Uma revisão baseada na evidência

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1 INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are an important cause of mortality worldwide. The prevention of its onset, as well as the adoption of measures to reduce morbidity and mortality after its onset are extremely important.

Several studies have suggested that dietary intake of flavonoids, mostly found in cocoa, may have a beneficial effect on reducing cardiovascular risk.

This study aims to assess the available evidence on the benefit of cocoa consumption in reducing cardiovascular risk, namely in preventing the development of CVD or improving its prognosis.

2 METHODOLOGY

Search for meta-analyses (MA), systematic reviews (SR) and clinical trials (CT) published between 01/01/2013 and 31/01/2023, using the MeSH terms "*cacao*" and "cardiovascular diseases" in the Pubmed, Cochrane, NHS Evidence and BMJ Journals



databases. The Strength of Recommendation Taxonomy (SORT) scale of the American Academy of Family Physicians was used to assign levels of evidence (LE) and strengths of recommendation (FR).

3 RESULTS

Ten studies were analyzed (two CE and seven MA). Regarding the effect of cocoa on cardiovascular risk factors, two studies showed significant differences in systolic and diastolic blood pressure values, one study showed increased insulin sensitivity, two studies showed reduced triglyceride values and three studies showed increased HDL-c. In addition, there was a beneficial effect on biomarkers associated with endothelial dysfunction and/or atherogenesis. In patients with established CVD, one study showed a beneficial effect in reducing NT pro-BNP in patients with heart failure. Studies selected for analysis were assigned NE 1 and 2.

4 DISCUSSION

Cocoa showed benefit in reducing risk factors for cardiovascular disease, with a grade B RF being assigned. More homogeneous and targeted studies will be needed for robust guidance on cocoa consumption in CVD prevention and prognosis.