Avitaminosis

Categories: Phenomena

Diseases caused by vitamin deficiency. The ghetto was almost entirely deficient in vitamin D, most often found in liver oil, fish, and fresh butter. Direct sunlight was unavailable, as most of the ghetto had to work in their departments until five o'clock in the evening, whereas their Sundays off were spent picking up food, wood, coal, etc., or carrying out household chores. This deficiency led to rickets (in children) and bone diseases which manifested in leg pain. Tiny amounts of liver oil, vigantol, or sunlamp treatments were regarded as remedies. In particular demand was vigantol (ergosterol1 exposed to light and dissolved in oil) which successfully cured rickets. During the first phase (from 1942 to the beginning of 1943), vigantol could be bought at a pharmacy, then later in the dispensary at the Special Unit of the Order Service (vide), and eventually only available by order of the Ressort [vide]. The price for 10 cm3 was 3 mk. Over time, black marketers seized hold of small amounts of the medicine destined for usual trade; by mid-1944 the prices were driven up to 300 Mk. It was erroneously prescribed and applied as a restorative and also occasionally for focal calcification from tuberculosis of the lung, further increasing demand. In the case of osteomalacia, results took effect quickly.

As a result of poor diets deprived of liver oil, butter, yolk, whole milk, cream, oranges, and also partially of fresh green vegetables, inhabitants of the ghetto suffered from deficiency in vitamins A, B, and C. These symptoms included poor wound- healing, dermatitis, respiratory diseases, and gastritis.

Deficiency in vitamins B and C led to paralysis, impaired balance, anemia, scrofula, pellagra, bleeding, muscle-tiredness, immune deficiency, and in many cases scurvy. It was associated with the rapid spread of tuberculosis. Preventive measures such as brewer’s yeast, wheat gruel, or whole grain bread were beyond reach, whereas green fruits, onions, and garlic were delivered to the

ghetto in small amounts. Home- grown vegetables from plots (vide Działki) were nowhere near enough; therefore the ghetto was defenseless against avitaminosis.

Many diseases started from avitaminosis.

Oskar Rosenfeld

Resources

Encyclopedia, p. 23-24.

Tags

provisions starvation sanitary conditions everyday life

Updated: 07-11-2026

Added: 07-07-2023