Examining data from provinces and municipalities with more than 200 cases and cities with more than 40 cases, researchers found that areas with high levels of selenium were more likely to recover from the virus. For example, in the city of Enshi in Hubei Province, which has the highest selenium intake in China, the cure rate (percentage of COVID-19 patients declared 'cured') was almost three-times higher than the average for all the other cities in Hubei Province. By contrast, in Heilongjiang Province, where selenium intake is among the lowest in the world, the death rate from COVID-19 was almost five-times as high as the average of all the other provinces outside of Hubei.

Most convincingly, the researchers found that the COVID-19 cure rate was significantly associated with selenium status, as measured by the amount of selenium in hair, in 17 cities outside of Hubei.

Kate Bennett, a medical statistician at the University of Surrey, said; "There is a significant link between selenium status and COVID-19 cure rate, however it is important not to overstate this finding; we have not been able to work with individual-level data and have not been able to take account of other possible factors such as age and underlying disease."

Ramy Saad, a doctor at Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton, currently taking an MSc degree in Nutritional Medicine at the Department of Nutritional Sciences at Surrey, commented; "The correlation we have identified is compelling, particularly given previous research on selenium and infectious diseases. As such, a careful and thorough assessment of the role selenium may play in COVID-19 is certainly justified and may help to guide ongoing public-health decisions."

Provided by University of Surrey


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