

Dutch prisoners less aggressive after supplementation

04-07-2007 - Gendringen, 4 JULY 2007

“The results of the Dutch prison study have confirmed the results of the British study into the relationship between diet and aggression”, explained pharmacist Dr. Gert Schuitemaker with reference to the Dutch study into food supplements, presented this week. “I would urge further follow-up research.” Gert Schuitemaker has been keenly awaiting the results of the Dutch study. In the magazine Ortho, of which he is editor-in-chief, the pharmacist has been calling for twenty years for more attention for the subject of nutrition and aggression. In 2003, he wrote a book entitled *Honger naar geweld* (Hunger for violence). The background was a remarkable British study amongst more than two hundred young detainees, headed by Bernard Gesch (Phd). The majority of these young people took a daily dose of one multivitamin tablet enriched with minerals and four fatty acid capsules. The remaining prisoners received a placebo. In the first group, violent behaviour was considerably reduced. Above all the number of serious violations fell spectacularly, including violent crime. The Dutch Ministry of Justice was informed of this British study in 2002, by the editorial board of Ortho. Under pressure from Parliament, the Ministry subsequently initiated a comparable study, implemented in collaboration with the Radboud University in Nijmegen. The study involved 221 young adult detainees in eight facilities: 116 detainees were administered food supplements, whilst 105 received placebos. The supplements consisted of vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids. The supplements were taken for between one and three months. The results suggest that the detainees who took supplements demonstrated less aggressive behaviour than the detainees given placebos. The number of reports and disciplinary placements was taken as the yardstick for aggression and rule violation. These results are in line with the results of the British prison study. According to the Ministry, however, it is still too early to develop specific interventions aimed at nutrition and aggression. More research is first required. This opinion is shared by Schuitemaker. “Now it has emerged that detainees here in the Netherlands also demonstrate less aggressive behaviour following the use of food supplements, follow-up studies are urgently necessary”, commented the pharmacist. “The Justice Ministry is on the right track. It is now a matter of pushing forward.”