# Of trials and tribulations

## Studies after studies are trying to find the link between diet and diseases. But where do contradicting results of related research leave us?

Medical science has always told us that the food we eat dictates the diseases we suffer from. While this may be true for lifestyle conditions like heart diseases and diabetes, how relevant is it for others?

Homoeopathy and other alternative sciences lay great emphasis on what to eat and what to avoid. Often, they insist that with a certain drug, one cannot drink coffee or other items whose consumption has become a habit. There is voluminous research on types of food and the diseases they cause/affect. I am all for a vegetarian diet, despite not being a vegetarian. Studies show that vegetarians live longer, and I feel that they are more equable than the aggressive meat eaters.

Western medical literature goes on at length about various diseases, and it is good that affluent countries focus on research while rest of us in the Third World still struggle to feed our population.

It is worth reviewing the situation with regard to prostate cancer. In 2008, over 35,000 men aged over 50 from more than 400 sites in the US took part in the Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT). The study was stopped by the monitoring committee four years later, after it found that vitamin E and selenium, either taken alone or together, did not prevent prostate cancer. Strangely, the incidence of prostate cancer was 17 per cent greater in the group taking vitamin E alone. It was an equally important observation that diabetes was more common in the group taking selenium alone. Men taking only selenium were also more likely to develop prostate cancer.

Strangely, the Alpha-Tocopherol, Beta-Carotene Cancer Prevention (ATBC) trial on 29,133 male smokers in Finland — conducted from 1985-93 by the US' National Cancer Institute and the National Institute for Health and Welfare of Finland to determine whether vitamin E could prevent lung and other cancers — showed a reduction in prostate cancer. The dosage of vitamin E in this study was 5 ml 50 IU/P, as opposed to that in SELECT's over 400 IU/P.