

Over the last years a number of epidemiological surveys have shown that the consumption of plant foods (i.e. fruits, vegetables, legumes and cereals) is correlated with lower incidences of some major chronic diseases, such as cancer and coronary heart disease. These correlations are not always in relation with the nutrient content of the foodstuff, suggesting the involvement of other physiologically active non-nutrient food components (i.e. phytochemicals) in the observed protective effects. The existing knowledge about these aspects was reviewed in the International Symposium on *Dietary Phytochemicals and Human Health*, held in Salamanca (Spain) in April, 2002, under the auspices of the Phytochemical Society of Europe and the University of Salamanca. Some 180 participants from 29 different countries attended the meeting where over 130 presentations were made, including more than 100 posters, 12 selected oral communications and 12 invited lectures made by experts approaching the field of phytochemicals from different perspectives. Particular focus was given to the antioxidants and other bioactive plant secondary metabolites present in food such as flavonoids, xenoe-strogens, glucosinolates, capsanoicins, polyacetylenes or folates. Presentations covered the full span of interest about these compounds: mechanisms of action, *in vitro* activity, structure-activity relationships, occurrence in food, bioavailability and mechanisms of body uptake and transport, metabolism and effects of the phytochemicals and their metabolites on gene expression and cell apoptosis and proliferation. Attention was also paid to the new aspects of genomics, proteomics and

metabolomics in phytochemical research. In addition to the Symposium a Satellite Workshop on European Research on Phytochemicals was organised, consisting of a review of the progress that was being made in the projects funded under the EU Fifth Framework Programme dealing with research into the health effects of phytochemicals, and the lines of the Sixth Framework Programme were presented by Dr. Liam Breslin, from the Directorate-General of Research of the European Commission.

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Prof. Dr. Julián C. Rivas-Gonzalo
Prof. Dr. Celestino Santos-Buelga (✉)
Unidad de Nutricion y Bromatologia
Facultad de Farmacia
Universidad de Salamanca
Campus Miguel de Unamuno
37007 Salamanca, Spain
Tel.: +34-9 23/29 45-37
Fax: +34-9 23/29 45-15
E-Mail: csb@usal.es