Role of Diet in Depression Identified

In that emerging data suggests the role of certain nutritional factors in depression risk, Miguel Angel Martinez-Gonzalez, from the University of Navarra (Spain), and colleagues analyzed data collected on 12,059 participants in the SUN Project during a six-year period. Subjects were surveyed as to their diet, lifestyle and ailments at the beginning of the project, over its course, and at the end of the project. Whereas none of the participants suffered from depression at the study's start, at the conclusion the team detected 657 new cases of the disease. Of all these cases, the participants with an elevated consumption of trans-fats (fats present in artificial form in industrially-produced pastries and fast food, and naturally present in certain whole milk products) presented up to a 48% increase in the risk of depression when they were compared to participants who did not consume these fats. In addition, the team observed a dose-response relationship, whereby the more trans-fats were consumed, the greater the harmful effect they produced in the volunteers. In contrast, the researchers observed that polyunsaturated fats (abundant in fish and vegetable oils) and of olive oil lowered the depression risk. As such, the team concludes that: "These findings suggest that cardiovascular disease and depression may share some common nutritional determinants related to subtypes of fat intake."

Sanchez-Villegas A, Verberne L, De Irala J, Ruiz-Canela M, Toledo E, et al. "Dietary Fat Intake and the Risk of Depression: The SUN Project." PLoS ONE 6(1): e16268. 26 Jan. 2011; doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0016268.