

ELDERLY GREEKS IN SPATA, GREECE
AND MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA:
FOOD HABITS, HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE

Antigone Kouris-Blazos

Bachelor of Science (Melbourne University 1984)
Bachelor of Science with Honours (Deakin University 1985)
Post Graduate Diploma of Dietetics (Deakin University 1986)

Department of Medicine, Monash Medical Centre
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

A thesis submitted for

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

MONASH UNIVERSITY
Melbourne, Australia

January 1994

To Alfred and Mitsi Kouris for providing the opportunity

&

Chris and Dimitri Blazos for providing perspective and inspiration

*'stay with what you've got; the mainstream Australian way of
life is not likely to be as good for your health'*

Powle's (1990a) Public Health Message to Ethnic Groups
in Australia after studying Greek migrants from Levkada

DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain material which has been previously submitted or accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in this or any other university.

This thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference or acknowledgement is made.

The author consents to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Antigone Kouris-Blazos

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The subject of this thesis grew out of discussions with Professor Mark Wahlqvist of the Department of Medicine, Monash Medical Centre, Monash University, who has supervised this thesis throughout. Professor Wahlqvist provided invaluable guidance, support and inspiration.

Professor Antonia Trichopoulou, of the Department of Nutrition and Biochemistry, Athens School of Public Health, provided the necessary contacts, guidance and support in Greece, which facilitated the completion of the study in Spata. Professor Trichopoulou also provided essential resources for the analysis of the data.

Dr Evangelos Polychronopoulos, of the Department of Nutrition and Biochemistry, Athens School of Public Health, assisted with the conduct of the study in Greece. His time and effort is greatly appreciated.

Dr Bridget Hsu-Hage, of the Department of Medicine, Monash Medical Centre, patiently provided computing and statistical advice and Dr Widjaja Lukito provided useful unpublished data on elderly Anglo-Celtic Australians. Mr Sam Lai offered his assistance with data handling and instruction on the usage of a statistical programme (SAS).

Mr Paul Ireland and Dr Graham Giles, of the Epidemiology Unit at the Anti-Cancer Council, provided useful unpublished data from the pilot study 'Health 2000' on Greek, Italian and Anglo-Celtic Australians.

Many thanks to Mrs Val Hamilton and Mr Chris Blazos for their thorough proof-reading of this thesis and to the support and efficiency of the library staff at Monash Medical Centre for assisting in the literature search.

The elderly participants of this study, almost without exception, were cooperative, helpful, interested and hospitable. Many thanks to all of them, without whom this study would not have been possible.

AIMS

1. To describe food intake (current & distant past), nutrient intake, lifestyle and health* of elderly Greeks in Spata Greece and Melbourne Australia.
2. To examine changes to food/nutrient intake, lifestyle and health on migration by comparing elderly Greeks in Spata and Melbourne.
3. To determine food and nutrient predictors of later life status (multidimensional index of health) in elderly Greeks.

HYPOTHESIS

The food habits of people of Greek ethnicity remain indicative of 'health' beyond the age of 70.

* Anthropometry and biochemistry/haematology included