LOW ZINC LEVEL AND POSITIVE ORAL CANDIDA SWAP VERY OFTEN SEEN IN MEDICAL PATIENTS WITH EATING PROBLEMS.

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Introduction
Many patients submitted to a gastroenterology department have eating problems as part of the disease picture. General medical examination including endoscopy, ultrasound and CT, evaluation of the patients’ pharmacological profile often fails to explain the low food intake and weight loss.

Material and methods
We systematically measured serum zinc and performed an oral swap for Candida in all patients where the initial examination has not been able to show an obvious reason for the eating problem, and included also patients with subjective symptoms from the oral cavity or objective findings such as mucosal irritation. None of the patients had typical Candida findings in the oral cavity.

Results
In a period of 3 months from (sept 2013 – dec. 2013) we examined 29 patients (14 female and 15 males age (27-95)
In 23 out of 29 patients serum zinc was reduced from 1, 2-10, normal value 10-19) and a positive Candida swap was found in 20 out of 29. No significant correlation between a positive Candida swap and low serum zinc level was observed (Fischer’s exact test 0.3) but looking at either a positive swap or low zinc this was observed in 26 of 29 patients, p< 0.001 (binomial test)
The patients were treated with Mycostatin for 2 weeks and supplied with oral or intravenous zinc followed by oral zinc for at least one month after serum zinc was normalized. If we found a reason for the zinc deficiency, the treatment period was prolonged.

Discussion
Zinc deficiency is much common than previously thought. About 25 % of world population has zinc deficiency. In our department of gastroenterology we have recently found zinc deficiency in about 50 % of the patients and measurements of zinc are becoming routine. There is no obvious correlation between zinc level and finding of a positive Candida swap, however many patients have both, so it is necessary to determine both parameters and treat both conditions. We have planned a more systematic study where both parameters are measured before and after treatment, but we recommend that serum zinc and Candida swap are examined in all patients with unexplained eating problems.