Casimir Funk Encyclopedia Article

Casimir Funk

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Casimir Funk

1884-1967

Polish-American biochemist who demonstrated in 1912 that chickens with beriberi recovered when their test diet was supplemented by a concentrate made from rice polishings. Beriberi was endemic in Asian regions, where white rice was a major component of the human diet. Funk suggested the name "vitamine" for the anti-beriberi factor (vitamin B_1 or thiamine) found in the supplement and other "accessory substances" because he thought that they were amines. Eventually, chemists demonstrated that not all accessory factors were amines and the term "vitamin" was adopted instead.