











Natural Health Review™

Proven Natural Health

Issue 12 - 2007

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Welcome to Natural Health Review Issue 12.

This month we feature some interesting studies on natural therapies for kids. The study on the potential benefits of EPA/DHA supplements with kids with ADHD had encouraging results. The other study found children who consumed dietary omega-3 fatty acids were significantly less likely to develop type 1 diabetes than those who didn't.

As always I hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Kind Regards,

Dr Shaun Holt

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Use of New Zealand green-lipped mussel extract as anti-inflammatory

The facts:

- The New Zealand green-lipped mussel *Perna canaliculus* contains a series of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) that have anti-inflammatory properties.
- These omega-3 PUFAs appear to act as anti-inflammatory agents by blocking lipoxygenase products of the arachidonic acid pathway.
- The most common omega-3 PUFA isolated from mussel extracts was found to be virtually identical to arachidonic acid.

Dr Shaun Holt:

The New Zealand green-lipped mussel and this study shows that extracts have potent anti-inflammatory properties. Chronic inflammation causes many common medical conditions such as asthma and allergies and has been linked to heart disease, osteoporosis, cognitive decline and Alzheimer's, and type-2 diabetes. We do not normally feature in vitro work (laboratory findings), but these findings explain what consumers have known for a long time – that extracts from New Zealand green-lipped mussel can help to treat diseases caused by inflammation.

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Omega 3 and type-1 diabetes in kids

The facts:

- Cod liver oil supplements appear to reduce the risk of type 1 diabetes in genetically-predisposed children.
- 1770 one-year-old children who were at increased risk for developing type-1 diabetes were followed for approximately 5 years, and their dietary intake of polyunsaturated fatty acids was assessed in relation to various diabetic markers.
- Children who consumed dietary omega-3 fatty acids were significantly less likely to develop type-1 diabetes than those who didn't.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Like me, you may have been forced to have a cod liver oil supplement as a child. But it will have been worth it if its stops me from getting diabetes. Whilst falling short of definitive proof that increased dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids can stop you from getting diabetes, this study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* provides strong evidence that this is the case, in children who for various reasons are at higher risk of developing this increasingly common disease.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/298/12/1420>

Herbal remedies for depression and anxiety

The facts:

- Many people with anxiety or depression use herbal remedies despite insufficient supportive data.
- This review examined trial literature for a number of herbal products and found only 2 (St John's wort for mild to moderate depression, and kava for anxiety) to be substantiated by sound evidence.
- Thorough examination of the risks and benefits of herbal remedies is required.

Dr Shaun Holt:

A systematic review is one of the highest levels of scientific evidence – it involves gathering and systematically assessing all the published, and sometimes unpublished, data available on a specific subject. This review looked at herbal treatments for anxiety and depression and found that two were supported by good evidence: St John's Wort for depression and kava for anxiety. The authors also pointed out that although there was sound evidence for these products in these conditions, they do have known side effects which consumers should be aware of.

<http://apt.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/abstract/13/4/312>

Potential benefits of EPA/DHA supplements with kids with ADHD

The facts:

- The findings from a small study indicate that children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may benefit from high-dose eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) supplements.
- Nine children were given 16.2g of EPA/DHA daily for 8 weeks (dosages were adjusted after 4 weeks to achieve blood levels similar to those found in the Japanese population).
- A psychiatrist reported significant improvements in the children's behaviour at the end of the study.

Dr Shaun Holt:

It has been estimated that around 5% of people have ADHD and new treatments are urgently needed. Zinc and magnesium may have some benefits, and there is growing evidence that fish oils may be of benefit. This was a small pilot study of 9 children with a novel feature being the adjustment of the dosage in order to produce blood levels similar to those in the Japanese population. A psychiatrist found that the children's behavior improved. Much more research is needed, but this is a very encouraging pilot study.

<http://www.nutritionj.com/content/6/1/16>



*Independent commentary and selection of studies
by Dr Shaun Holt, BPharm (hons), MBChB (hons)*

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Effect of Coenzyme Q10 and statin treatment

The facts:

- Patients who take statins to reduce high cholesterol levels may develop a variety of muscle-related symptoms that can be bothersome enough to force them to stop treatment.
- This study found that coenzyme Q10 supplementation (100 mg/day) for a month significantly reduced the degree of muscle pain associated with statin treatment.
- Coenzyme Q10 supplementation may therefore be useful in patients experiencing muscle pain during statin treatment who might otherwise have to stop taking the drug.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Statins are one of the wonderdrugs of modern medicine, for both preventing heart disease in the first place and for preventing further problems in a person with heart disease. The main drawback of statins is their side effect of causing pain in muscles, called myopathies. This was a small study, but there was a significant reduction in pain in those with muscle pain from statins who took coenzyme Q10. Given the large benefits of these medications, I would recommend trying a coenzyme Q10 supplement instead of stopping the statin if you get muscle pains.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Potential interactions between complementary products and conventional medicines

The facts:

- Approximately 14% of the elderly patients involved in the Cardiovascular Health Study in 1999 were taking complementary or alternative medicines in addition to conventional medicines.
- Importantly, 6% of patients took combinations that placed them at significant risk for adverse interactions.
- Most of the risky combinations involved ginkgo, garlic or ginseng with blood thinning agents aspirin or warfarin; these combinations increase the risk of bleeding.

Dr Shaun Holt:

The aim of Natural Health Review is to give you practical information, and whilst this usually involves presenting studies that show that a natural health treatment works, this study is useful for other reasons. Using data on medications from over 5,000 elderly people, around 6% were taking a combination of complementary products and conventional medicines that left them at risk of an adverse interaction. The major risk identified was taking ginkgo, garlic, or ginseng with blood thinning medications such as aspirin or warfarin. People taking blood thinning should be careful about which complementary products they take and should check first with their doctor or pharmacist.

<http://www.theannals.com/cgi/content/abstract/41/10/1617>

Chemopreventive characteristics of avocado

The facts:

- Phytochemicals found in fruit and vegetables are believed to play an important role in the prevention of cancer.
- Evidence now suggests that the highly nutritious avocado also contains phytochemicals with anticancer properties.
- Avocado may therefore be a useful dietary component of cancer prevention strategies.

Dr Shaun Holt:

For new cancer treatments you have to start somewhere and that usually means finding chemicals that kill cancer cells in test tubes before trials are carried out in people. Avocados, named after a word meaning "testicle", grow on 20m tall trees that produce around 120 fruit each. This paper summarizes the many studies that indicate that certain chemicals found in avocado act on many pathways in the cancer process. Although not proven, it follows that avocado in the diet may prevent cancer.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Clarification: please note that the comments on the study featured in Issue 11 "Maca used as a non-hormonal alternative to HRT", referred to the use of Maca root, whereas the product used in the study was Pre-Gelatinized Organic Maca (Maca-GO)™. To view this study go to - <http://www.ijbs.org/User/ContentFullText.aspx?VolumeNO=2&StartPage=360>



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Acupuncture for persistent allergic rhinitis

The facts:

- Recent results suggest that acupuncture may be useful in the treatment of persistent allergic rhinitis.
- 80 patients received real acupuncture or sham acupuncture twice a week for 8 weeks and were then followed for a further 3 months.
- At the end of the study, improvements in nasal obstruction, sneezing, rhinorrhoea and nasal itch were greater after real acupuncture than after sham acupuncture.

Dr Shaun Holt:

As is the case with other allergic conditions such as asthma, eczema and peanut allergy, the number of people with allergic rhinitis is increasing. If it is confined to a particular time of the year, we call this condition hay fever, but some people have it all year round. This intriguing study assessed whether acupuncture was an effective treatment, and it was a particularly well-designed study as it had a control group who received sham acupuncture, whereby needles are applied but not to the traditionally used areas. Don't ask me how it works, but the results showed that acupuncture was in fact an effective treatment.

http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/187_06_170907/xue10055_fm.html

Probiotics in prevention of eczema

The facts:

- In a well-controlled trial, mothers with a family history of allergies received the oral probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* daily from 36 weeks' gestation until giving birth; their babies then continued with the same product for 12 months.
- Infants who had received the probiotic had significantly less eczema during their second year, and less reactivity to the skin prick test than those who received placebo.
- Because probiotics appear to alleviate eczema in children they may potentially reduce the risk of developing respiratory allergic disease later in life.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Eczema is a common condition characterized by inflammation of the upper layers of the skin. In this study mothers took either probiotics or placebo from week 36 of the pregnancy and the baby was given the same treatment for a year. The authors commented on the results that "although a preventive effect of probiotics on infant eczema was not confirmed, the treated infants had less IgE-associated eczema at 2 years of age and therefore possibly run a reduced risk to develop later respiratory allergic disease". More work needs to be done in this fascinating area before probiotics can be unreservedly recommended to prevent allergic diseases, but these results are promising.

<http://www.jacionline.org/article/PIIS0091674907001649/abstract>

Spa therapy in the rehabilitation of rheumatoid arthritis

The facts:

- Radon baths were beneficial in patients with rheumatoid arthritis when used as part of a rehabilitation program.
- The results from a well-controlled study in 134 patients showed that radon baths reduced the limitations in daily living and the need for steroids and NSAIDs compared with artificial carbon dioxide baths.
- Radon baths therefore represent a useful addition to rehabilitation programs for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Radon is a radioactive gas and there are reports for over 200 years that sitting in radon baths can improve help. This study assessed the benefits of radon baths in people with rheumatoid arthritis, which is a particularly painful and debilitating condition. Patients using the radon baths, in this well-designed study, had reduced limitations in daily living activities and required fewer potent medications, when compared to people using non-radon baths. If I had rheumatoid arthritis I would definitely give radon baths a try based on this study.

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/296/2007/00000027/00000008/00000293>

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