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Welcome to naturalhealthreview.org Issue 5.

This month we feature a very interesting study on broccoli for the improvement to the immune system and to help slow down the aging process. Could broccoli be the holy grail! Also included is a study that looks at the use of acupuncture for chronic pain conditions such as low back pain. The results were most encouraging!

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

Kind regards,

Dr Shaun Holt
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Co-Q10 may ease fatigue after exercise

The facts:

- Oral coenzyme Q10 reduced the effects of physical fatigue in a well-controlled trial in healthy volunteers when given for 8 days at a dose of 300 mg/day.
- The volunteers reported less fatigue and showed an improved physical performance during fatigue-inducing bicycle testing after taking coenzyme Q10 compared with placebo.
- It therefore appears that coenzyme Q10 might ease or even prevent unfavourable conditions resulting from physical fatigue.



Dr Shaun Holt:

Co-Q10 is the subject of intense research, with over 250 studies published last year. An important area of this research is its effects on skeletal muscle, given that some common drugs that are taken to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol can reduce Co-Q10 serum levels. This small study showed benefits in terms of reducing muscle fatigue. Amongst other things, Co-Q10 is an excellent antioxidant and so this would be another reason to consider taking Co-Q10 as a regular supplement.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nut.2007.12.007>



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Elderly muscles benefit from amino acid supplements

The facts:

- Regular intake of a nutritional supplement containing essential amino acids and arginine might be able to reverse the decline in muscle strength seen with aging, according to the results of a study in 12 glucose intolerant patients with an average age of 67 years.
- Patients were given 11g of the nutritional supplement twice daily between meals for 4 months, and were tested for leg strength every 4 weeks.
- Lean body mass and leg strength both improved significantly during the study, as did walking speed and other function-tests.

Dr Shaun Holt:

“Any Help In Learning These Little Molecules Proves Truly Valuable”. No I haven't gone mad, but I am a fan of medical mnemonics and the sentence above can help you to remember the nine essential amino acids: phenylalanine, valine, threonine, tryptophan, isoleucine, methionine, histidine, leucine, and lysine. Arginine is considered to be conditionally essential ie. not normally required in the diet, but must be taken by specific populations that do not synthesize it in adequate amounts. This small study found that a supplement of essential amino acids and arginine helped elderly people maintain muscle strength and mass.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.clnu.2008.01.001>



Chromium picolinate used for type 2 diabetes

The facts:

- Treatment with a chromium picolinate and biotin combination (CPB) may help reduce cardiovascular risk in patients with type 2 diabetes, according to the findings of a study in 36 patients with moderate obesity and type 2 diabetes.
- Patients received CPB or placebo in addition to their regular diabetic medication for 4 weeks, after which time their blood fats were measured.
- At the final visit, patients receiving CPB were found to have a significantly lower risk of cardiovascular disease than patients receiving placebo

Dr Shaun Holt:

Chromium Picolinate is probably one of those supplements that you have seen in the health food store and wondered what it is and what it is used for. It is mainly used for preventing or treating chromium deficiency and studies have shown that it can improve glucose metabolism in people with diabetes. In this study, when taken in combination with biotin, it had positive effects on glucose and blood lipids in patients with diabetes and moderate obesity.

<http://www.amjmedsci.com/pt/re/ajms/abstract.00000441-200703000-00003.htm>

Exercise slows decline in Alzheimer's patients

The facts:

- A 1-hour exercise program twice weekly for a year slowed the decline in daily function in rest home patients with Alzheimer's disease compared with those receiving regular care.
- The ability to perform activities of daily living, the primary measure in this study, declined at a slower rate in patients who exercised than in those who did not.
- Exercise appeared to have no effect on behavioural disturbance, depression or nutritional status.

Dr Shaun Holt:

There is very little we can do to help people with Alzheimer's disease at present, with most medications having little tangible benefit. This important study showed that simple exercise was of benefit. People who undertook just 1 hour of exercise twice a week in their nursing home had a reduced decline in several outcome measures of Alzheimer's disease.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-5415.2007.01035.x>



**Independent commentary
by Dr Shaun Holt, BPharm
(hons), MBChB (hons)**



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Aromatherapy may improve mood but will not make you better



The facts:

- Lemon oil improves mood compared with lavender oil or water, irrespective of previous use or expected outcomes of aromatherapy, according to the findings of a trial in 56 healthy men and women.
- Interestingly, noradrenaline responses to a stress test remained elevated after exposure to lemon oil, but not to water or lavender oil.
- Neither lemon oil nor lavender reliably affected interleukin, cortisol, heart rate or blood pressure responses to the stress test.

Dr Shaun Holt:

This was a very simple but effective test of aromatherapy: the use of aromatic compounds from plants to improve mood or health. The study was blinded, in that neither researcher nor subject knew what the odors were, but I would think that it would be pretty obvious. Despite this limitation, lemon oil was found to enhance mood, building on animal studies that have found that it can reduce stress levels in mice. Lavender is often used as an antiseptic.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychen.2007.11.015>

Broccoli boosts immunity, slows aging

The facts:

- A study in old mice has shown that some of the cellular effects of aging can be reversed through treatment with the Nrf2 agonist sulforaphane.
- The effects of sulforaphane occurred via Nrf2-mediated antioxidant activity and glutathione synthesis.
- Sulforaphane and N-acetyl cysteine were both shown to restore redox equilibrium, a key factor in maintaining cellular immunity during the aging process.

Dr Shaun Holt:

This was an in vitro, or test tube study, and so all the usual caveats apply. Extracts from broccoli were found to improve the immune system of mice and slow down the aging process. Could broccoli be the holy grail! President Bush Senior made the mistake of saying that he did not like broccoli only to find several tons of it delivered to the White House by a broccoli lobby group. If it turns out that we need to eat nothing but broccoli to live longer, don't worry – there are at least 20 different varieties.

[http://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749\(08\)00148-6/abstract](http://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749(08)00148-6/abstract)



Acupuncture for chronic pain

The facts:

- An observational study of health insurance claimants has shown that acupuncture is a popular treatment for patients with chronic pain conditions in Germany.
- Almost half a million patients who received acupuncture for headache, lower back pain or osteoarthritis provided data for the study, and 80% of them were female.
- Physicians rated the effectiveness of acupuncture treatment as marked or moderate in 76% of patients in the study, and minimal or poor in only 20%.

Dr Shaun Holt:

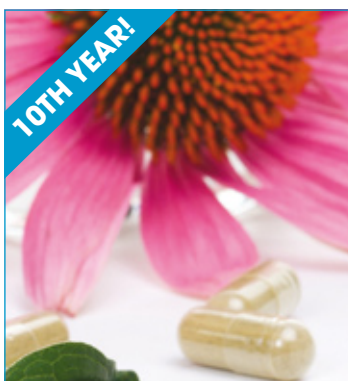
This was an enormous study, looking at the effectiveness of acupuncture in Germany, where it is widely practiced as part of the standard health system. And the results were very impressive, with at least 90% of doctors reporting that it was effective, and over half reporting that it was at least moderately effective. In the study acupuncture was used for chronic pain conditions such as low back pain. Chronic pain is defined as lasting for 6 months or more, or lasting for longer than would be expected from the natural healing process.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2006.09.005>



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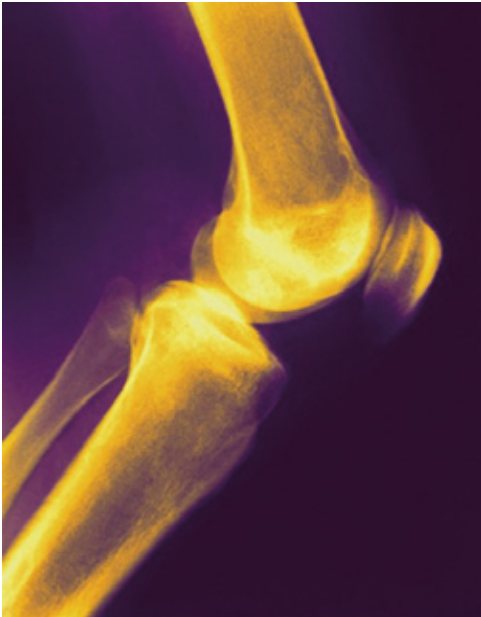
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Try an electrical stimulator for osteoarthritis

The facts:

- An electrical stimulus device has been shown to be useful in the treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee, without causing any serious adverse effects.
- 58 patients with moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis used either an active or placebo device at home for up to 14 hours each day and were evaluated for various outcomes after 3 months.
- Levels of pain, stiffness and function all improved significantly with the active device, and the percent age of patients who improved by more than 50% over the 3-month period was also significantly higher in the group using the active device.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Effective supplements for osteoarthritis include glucosamine, chondroitin, boswellia and selenium. This study assessed the effectiveness of an electrical stimulating device and the results were very impressive. The study was well designed, with a placebo treatment group, and improvements were seen in pain, stiffness and function. Some results were not statistically significant, and so bigger studies are needed, but this looks like a promising alternative way of treating this common, often painful, condition.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.joca.2007.01.004>

Green tea could help prevent cold and flu symptoms

The facts:

- A proprietary formulation of *Camellia sinensis* (green tea) capsules helped prevent cold and flu symptoms in healthy adults treated twice daily for three months.
- Daily symptom logs showed that approximately a third fewer patients taking green tea capsules reported cold and flu symptoms compared with placebo during the 3-month period.
- *Camellia sinensis* was also found to enhance $\gamma\delta$ T cell function compared with placebo.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Camellia sinensis (CSF) is another is another name for the tea plant and the levels of oxidation of the leaves lead to the different varieties such as white, green and black tea. This placebo-controlled trial found that those taking green tea capsules had significantly fewer cold and flu symptoms over a 3 month period. Importantly, this study also found a mechanism by which this benefit occurs – an increase in immune activity in certain white blood cells.

<http://www.jacn.org/cgi/content/abstract/26/5/445>



Probiotic cheddar to offer blood pressure benefits

The facts:

- Addition of the probiotic *Lactobacillus acidophilus* L10 to cheddar cheeses improves proteolysis of the cheeses and their ACE inhibitory activity, according to an investigation that added various lactococci bacteria to cheddar cheeses prior to ripening for 24 weeks.
- In cheeses started with *L. acidophilus* L10, bacteria counts were consistent regardless of the ripening temperature.
- Proteolysis and ACE inhibitor activity of the L10 cheeses improved as the ripening temperature increased from 4°C to 8 and 12°C.

Dr Shaun Holt:

One of the most commonly prescribed medicines are called ACE inhibitors – they are used to reduce blood pressure. Amazingly, cheddar cheese containing probiotics contained substances that inhibited ACE and could therefore reduce blood pressure. Cheddar cheese has an extra step in the production process whereby the curd is kneaded with salt after heating. It will be fascinating to see clinical trials!

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-3841.2008.00689.x>

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