










Natural Health Review

Proven Natural Health

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Welcome to Natural Health Review issue seven. I hope you are enjoying the lovely summer weather.

This month we feature a wide variety of research studies including interesting results on the effects of olive oil and the use of omega-3 in reducing the risk of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. I have also featured the fascinating results of a survey on the attitude of New Zealand GPs to complementary and alternative medicine.

I am looking forward to presenting at the upcoming Natural Health Products Summit in Nelson in a couple of weeks and to meeting some of our subscribers there.

Kind Regards,

Dr Shaun Holt

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Omega 3 and fibre prevent risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

The facts:

- Just over 1000 people completed a dietary questionnaire in a study looking at the association between certain foods and the risk of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.
- Dietary fibre and fish oils including omega-3 greatly reduced the risk of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.
- Other foods containing beta-carotene and alpha-tocopherol (Vitamin E) were also beneficial, although calcium and retinol were found to slightly increase the risk.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Non-Hodgkin's lymphomas are a group of diseases which are cancers of the white blood cells and are different to another type, which is called Hodgkin's disease. People who get the disease usually first notice painless swellings in areas where there are lots of lymph nodes, such as the armpit or groin. Among the major findings of this case-control study was the association of a reduced risk of this cancer in those who omega-3 fatty acid and fibre in the diet.

<http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/164/12/1222>

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Berries can protect against oxidative damage

The facts:

- Extracts from boysenberries and blackcurrants were tested to see whether they were effective at preventing damage to human cells.
- The berry extracts were found to protect the cells against oxidative damage which is a key part of many diseases.
- Blackcurrant extract provided more protection than boysenberries although both berries may offer health benefits.

Dr Shaun Holt:

The same berries that are used to make the popular drinks like Ribena were tested in this study. Oxidative damage is thought to be a factor in a multitude of diseases, and the fact that this was reduced by these berries adds weight to their claims to be “superfoods”. Caution is needed as the results from this laboratory-based work may not necessarily translate into health benefits, although this would appear likely.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/abstract/112257860/>

Tea relieves radiotherapy skin reactions

The facts:

- People undergoing radiation therapy for cancer may have skin reactions that can be severe which result in delays to the cancer treatment.
- In a clinical study 60 patients with skin lesions as a result of radiation treatment had extract of green or black tea applied to the site.
- Tea extracts were found to aid the healing process, although the methods by which this occurs needs further study.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Radiotherapy can cause severe local skin reactions and current treatments are far from ideal. This work needs to be followed by randomised controlled clinical trials, comparing the tea extracts to current treatments, but it is an interesting lead to a potentially better treatment. The researchers also demonstrated mechanisms to explain how the extracts may work.

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1741-7015/4/28>



Discussing use of herbal medicine with GPs

The facts:

- The majority of women interviewed as part of a British study did not disclose to their GP that they were using herbal medicines.
- Women were generally not aware of the potential interactions between herbal and prescription medicines and most did not report side effects that they had experienced.
- Other reasons for not communicating with their GP was the fear of being criticised and GPs failing to ask their patients about herbal medicine use.

Dr Shaun Holt:

This study is different from the studies that we usually discuss – the information was gathered not by collecting information or undertaking experiments, but by interviewing people and asking for their opinions. The message is that most people do not tell their doctors about any herbal treatments that they are taking for a variety of reasons. However, it is good practice to inform your doctor, as there are many potentially dangerous interactions between herbal treatments and prescribed medications.

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6882/6/40/abstract>



*Independent commentary by
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Optimists may have longer lives



The facts:

- 7000 American students completed a questionnaire about their personality when they started University in the 1960s.
- The number of deaths that occurred was studied for the next 40 years.
- Optimistic people were generally found to live longer than pessimistic people.

Dr Shaun Holt:

I'm optimistic about the results of this study! We know that the mind has a huge effect on our health, even though the mechanisms are not well understood and this is further confirmed by this study. A similar study a few years ago tried to determine whether optimistic people were more successful because that were more optimistic or whether they were optimistic because they were successful; the researchers found that their personality was likely to be the cause of their success and not vice versa.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/166/22/2478>

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Olive oil use may prevent cancer

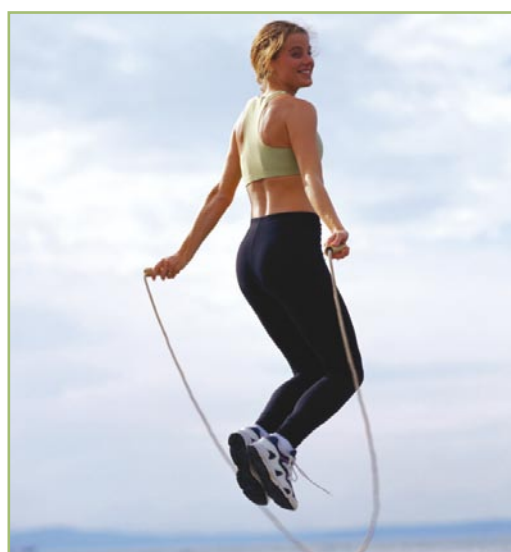
The facts:

- 180 healthy European males consumed 25millilitres of olive oil every day for 3 weeks in a study to investigate the health properties of olive oil.
- Breakdown products in the body which are associated with cancer were found to be higher in men from Northern Europe than Central or Southern Europe at the start of the study.
- Olive oil was found to lower the amount of these breakdown products in the body by more than 10%, suggesting that olive oil may offer some protection against cancer.

Dr Shaun Holt:

There tends to be less cases of cancer in the South of Europe where the population tends to consume more olive oil as part of their usual diet. There is an association, but this does not necessarily mean that the olive oil is responsible. This study attempts to answer the question as to whether the olive oil is responsible and the answer is that it may well be, given that this excellent study demonstrated a mechanism whereby the olive oil may provide benefits.

<http://www.fasebj.org/cgi/content/abstract/21/1/45>



Exercise reduces breast tumour risk

The facts:

- Almost 42,000 post-menopausal women took part in an American study to investigate the link between physical activity and the incidence of breast cancer.
- Women who were more physically active had a lower incidence of breast cancer
- Increased exercise appeared to have the greatest effect at reducing the risk of aggressive type tumours.

Dr Shaun Holt:

The most important message from this study is that exercise can help reduce the risk of breast cancer. It was interesting to see that this effect was larger in certain groups of women who had specific types of tumour. This may provide important leads for future research but at this stage the beneficial effects of exercise are once again confirmed.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/166/22/2478>

Please see Dr Shaun Holt's new Natural Health Column at www.pharmacydirect.co.nz and in the Bay of Plenty Times every Tuesday



Massage Therapy for Osteoarthritis



The facts:

- Almost 70 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee either underwent massage therapy for 8 weeks or had no treatment.
- The patients who had massage therapy had reduced pain and more flexibility than those who had no treatment.
- Further studies are recommended to assess appropriate length of treatment and whether this type of therapy is cost-effective.

Dr Shaun Holt:

These are interesting findings and potentially very useful given the potential side effects of many of the medications that are used to treat arthritis. In addition, we are likely to see more and more people suffering from arthritis as the population ages. The authors are quite right to state that further studies are needed, but this well-performed study is a great starting point.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/166/22/2533>

GPs attitudes to complementary medicine

The facts:

- In a New Zealand study to investigate the use of complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) among GPs, 20% of GPs used CAM and 95% had referred their patients to practitioners.
- Acupuncture and chiropractic treatment were the most commonly used therapies.
- Only 1/3 of GPs had received formal training in complementary therapies whereas 2/3 believed that alternative treatments should be included in standard medical training.

Dr Shaun Holt:

It is great to have some local research into the use of alternative medicines and the newspapers widely reported the fact that nearly every GP referred patients to one or more forms of complementary and alternative medicine. This is despite most of them having no formal training. Given the increase in complementary and alternative medicine research and publications such as this one which highlight evidence-based natural health, my prediction is that the lines between Western and alternative health will become more blurred. Health professionals will recommend treatments that work, regardless of their origin or classification.

<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/abstract.php?id=2361>

Combination supplement may support weight management



The facts:

- 80 overweight or obese people took part in a study to investigate whether a dietary supplement containing tyrosine, capsaicin, catechines and caffeine increased their ability to burn fat.
- After 8 weeks people who were taking the supplement in addition to reducing calorie intake burned fat at a greater rate than those who were on a reduced calorie diet alone.
- Body fat mass was reduced in the group taking the supplement by almost 1kg and no effect was seen on heart rate or blood pressure.

Dr Shaun Holt:

We know that exercise can burn off fat, but on this study the idea was to burn off fat by using a combination of natural products such as caffeine that increase your heart rate and metabolism. It also seemed to work, with around an extra kilo being lost in the group who took the supplement. However, I would not recommend that this supplement combination was taken long-term as I would be worried about the effects on the heart and blood pressure.

<http://www.nature.com/ijo/journal/v31/n1/abs/0803351a.html>

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