



Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia

www.chc.org.au

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Supplements Plus

This free newsletter is produced about every two months when there is sufficient information reported in the medical research journals. You may send this newsletter to your friends or customers who may subscribe by emailing to chc@chc.org.au and writing **Subscription to Supplements Plus** in the subject line. The information provided should not be seen as medical advice. The CHC suggests you talk to a healthcare professional when considering the use of complementary medicines.

Kind regards, Anna Day, Editor.

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Independent tests show glucosamine labels are accurate

Re-testing of some of the glucosamine products tested and reported by *Choice* magazine have now been completed. These independent tests by TGA-licensed testing laboratories found every sample tested so far to be true to the label. That means that the amount of glucosamine in the product is the same as stated the label.

Echinacea research used the wrong dose!



A negative report in the *New England Journal of Medicine** on echinacea, which claimed that echinacea did not prevent or treat colds, has major research shortcomings, as the researchers admit. "The dose used to test the product was so low it was like a woman taking a third of a contraceptive pill and not expecting to get pregnant," said CHC executive director Dr Tony Lewis. One of the researchers involved has since said that the dose was too low and all agreed in their conclusion that

they could not generalise from their research.

Dr David Gangemi of Clemson University responded to a question posed about this research at last month's Medicines from the Earth Symposium in Black Mountain, North Carolina, stating, "I think in retrospect if we go back and we look at some of the other products that are out there maybe we're [using] only one tenth the levels we should be."

In the conclusion of the research report the researchers (who had isolated only three substances from the root of only one rarely used species of Echinacea) said: “It is conceivable, however, that other chemical constituents or combinations of constituents that were not tested in this study have important biological effects....Given the variety of echinacea preparations, it will be difficult to provide conclusive evidence that echinacea has no role in the treatment of the common cold.”

Dr Lewis said that this latest research is just one of many studies that have looked at echinacea. “It is used as a herbal remedy for the common cold and is supported by research collated by the internationally renowned Cochrane Collaboration which says that echinacea probably does help prevent the common cold, but more research is required.”

“The dosage researched in this study was only 300mg three times a day, lower than would normally be recommended in Australia and lower than most products available here. They researched only one of three species, and not the most commonly used in Australia. Also only one of more than 100 rhinoviruses was used in the nasal inoculation, whereas many viruses can be responsible for the common cold.”

University of New England’s School of Health Associate Professor Kerry Bone says given the extreme challenge that this artificial model of inoculation created for the immune system, the dose tested by the researchers of 300mg three times a day may be too low. He said herbalists recommend much higher doses to treat those with colds.

*Turner, R.B. *et al.* An evaluation of *Echinacea angustifolia* in experimental rhinovirus infections. *NEJM* 353(4):341-8. July 28, 2005). <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/353/4/341>

The Latest Research in Brief

The pill and calcium Oral contraceptives may prevent young women from attaining optimal bone mass and increase their chances of developing osteoporosis in later life. But a new study from Purdue University indicates that upping dietary calcium may offset the effects. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* Teegarden et al 10.1210/jc.2004-0924, <http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/jc.2004-0924v1>

Depression post-heart attack Depression leads to a three-fold increase in death post-heart attack and the greatest risk period is 12 months after the first attack. Washington University School of Medicine is assessing the effectiveness of omega-3 as a preventative treatment. *Archives of Internal Medicine* Carney et al vol.165; pp. 1486-1491, July 11, 2005. <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/165/13/1486>

Zinc and iron together Research shows zinc supplementation alone does not appear to have a clinically important negative effect on iron status. However, when zinc is given with iron, iron indicators do not improve as greatly as when iron is given alone. A recent literature review showed that in most of the studies, iron supplementation did not affect the biochemical status of zinc, but the data are not clear regarding morbidity outcomes. Further research is needed. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* Fischer Walker et al Vol. 82, No. 1, 5-12, July 2005 <http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/82/1/5>

Adequate intake of lutein Lutein is postulated to reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration. Researchers have show supplementation with 4.1 and 20.5 mg lutein as beadlets increased plasma lutein concentrations 3.5- and 10-fold, respectively. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* Thurman Vol. 82, No. 1, 88-97, July 2005 www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/82/1/88

Dangers of low chromium levels Research has shown a correlation between low levels of chromium and increased risk of heart attacks in men. Previous research shows benefits for those at risk of diabetes due to of its effect on insulin and glucose tolerance. Johns Hopkins University measured chromium in toenail samples from 684 men who had previously had a myocardial infarction; they were recruited from hospitals in eight different European

countries and Israel. Compared with a control group of men that had never had a heart attack, the study group had lower levels of chromium. *American Journal of Epidemiology* Guallar et al vol 162, issue 2, pp157-64. <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/162/2/157>

Elderly women may need more protein Researchers from the University of Western Australia and other Australian institutions studied data on 1077 women aged around 75 years old, assessing the link between protein intake and bone density. They found the higher the protein intake (more than 87g per day) the greater the bone density. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* Devine et al vol 81, no 6, pp1423-1428 www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/81/6/1423

Cauliflower fighting breast cancer Cauliflower is a member of the *Brassicaceae* cabbage family that includes brussels sprouts and broccoli. Scientists have used the juice of the leaves in laboratory tests. The cauliflower compounds specifically targeted breast cancer cells and all cauliflower varieties tested suppressed cell proliferation. Cell growth inhibition was accompanied by significant cell death at the higher juice concentrations, although no evidence of apoptosis (programmed cell death) was found. These results suggest that the widely available cruciferous vegetables are potential chemo preventive agents. *Journal of Nutrition* Brandi et al 135:1503-1509, June 2005 www.nutrition.org/cgi/content/abstract/135/6/1503

Changing views of general practitioners



Ginkgo Biloba

The most commonly recommended CMs were: zinc, iron, potassium, folic acid, magnesium, calcium, vitamin Bs, multivitamins and minerals, fish oil, glucosamine and co-enzyme Q10. Many also recommended *Ginkgo biloba* and black cohosh. Some recommended garlic, echinacea and olive leaf extract, as well as selenium and fever few, while a very small number recommended a much larger range of herbal medicines.

Many of the Asian doctors had fathers or grandfathers who were Chinese medicine practitioners and some still used it themselves. However, only one recommended it to patients, and that doctor was a qualified acupuncturist. They were unaware of the massive research being done into Chinese medicine in Australia, the USA, China and South Korea.

身体好

Meanwhile, there are naturopaths in Melbourne who are hiring general practitioners to work for them – a practice unacceptable to the AMA and state medical boards 30 years ago. And medical acupuncturists (GPs) are

Good Health arguing against the registration of traditional Chinese medicine practitioners (now registered in Victoria but seeking registration in WA and NSW) because the GPs are concerned it will give TCM practitioners inappropriate status, without appropriate diagnosis skills. TCM practitioners, on the other hand, are concerned GPs are using acupuncture without TCM theoretical and diagnostic understanding.

If you are considering coming off HRT

More than one-fifth (21.2 percent) of women using HRT reported having moderate or severe symptoms after stopping their therapy, compared with 4.8 percent of the placebo group. Moderate or severe vasomotor symptoms (those that involve changes in the size of blood vessels, leading to problems like hot flashes or night sweats) were nearly six times more



Black Cohosh

likely, while pain and stiffness were more than twice as likely in women who had been taking HRT. The authors recommended more research into natural alternatives.

Ockene et al *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* 2005;294:183-193. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/294/2/183>

If you do choose to come off HRT with the idea of using a complementary medicine instead, you are left with the question of whether you can start taking the CM as you are tapering off the HRT. One big selling German natural alternative to HRT says that you can start on the natural product as you slowly reduce the HRT, and that is the view of naturopaths contacted by the CHC, however there is no research to support that view as yet. The CHC recommends you consult your healthcare professional.

America versus Australia

CHC Technical Director Allan Crosthwaite has just attended a meeting of international natural health product industry associations and a US trade show. He reports: "I believe Australia has one of the highest standards for quality and safety for complementary medicines. Other countries said we lead the world in the development of safety standards.

"Our regulatory environment is not perfect. We have hurdles to cross to ensure that the governance and policy development is appropriate to the very low level of risk our products present. However, the Australian regulatory standards that have been set to date are protecting consumers from the safety and quality problems that are occurring internationally. The American industry is being hit extremely hard by the barrage of bad publicity relating to their safety issues and some reported "litigation bounty hunters" preying on the US dietary supplement industry. The situation has become so bad that the American industry is proactive in forcing the FDA to take action to introduce regulations to arrest the problems.

"In Australia sponsors of therapeutic goods are required by law to hold the evidence to support all claims and there is a mandated advertising code of practice. A walk around the US industry expo revealed numerous unsubstantiated therapeutic claims not permitted here.

"Consumers in Australia can be confident about the commitment of the Australian industry to safety and quality standards for complementary medicine - that's not necessarily the case in other countries," said Mr. Crosthwaite.

What's On

The 15th IFOAM Organic World Congress is at the Adelaide Convention Centre 20-23 September 2005. It will also include the International Scientific Conference on Organic Agriculture and the 8th International IFOAM Organic Viticulture and Wine Conference.

The NSW Northern Rivers Greenridge Herb Festival will be held at Lismore in the north of the state from 21-22 August this year. Activities will include educational sessions on the use of herbs in complementary medicines.

11th International Holistic Health Conference Integrating the Art & Science, 12-15 August 2005, Novotel Twin Waters Resort, Sunshine Coast, QLD. "*The Definitive Practitioners Conference on Holistic Health*" <http://www.aima.net.au>

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