

Media Release

Omega-3 fish oils: The cost-effective treatment

The Complementary Healthcare Council (CHC) of Australia accentuates the protective qualities of omega-3 fish oils and the cost-efficiencies associated with their preventative use as confirmed by Deloitte Access Economics research earlier this year. Executive Director of the CHC, Dr Wendy Morrow, emphasised the large body of evidence from clinical trials that show omega-3 fish oils protect against heart disease.

‘There is a growing pool of research not to be ignored which provides evidence that omega-3 fatty acids are effective in lowering the incidence of coronary heart disease, stroke and heart attack, especially amongst those who have survived a heart attack and those with high blood cholesterol. Dietary interventions are the common suggestion for those people who have suffered from a heart attack, however fish oil supplements have been shown to offer a wider range of benefits’, Dr Morrow highlighted.

‘In Australia we’re lucky that our fish stocks only contain low levels of toxins such as dioxin and methylmercury. However, as Access Economics (2010) have previously pointed out, high levels of these toxins may lead to poisoning, and as such, fish oil supplementation offers a favourable alternative to dietary intervention. Studies¹ have proven that fish oil supplements offer a plethora of advantages as they provide the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids without the risk of toxicity, she added.

The Deloitte Access Economics cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the CHC was conducted to estimate the net benefit of fish oils as adjunctive treatment for prevention of heart disease, compared to standard of care without fish oils supplements. The analysis confirmed that fish oil supplementation offered very good ‘value for money’ for Australians who had recently survived a heart attack, with an estimated cost per disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) averted of \$2,200².

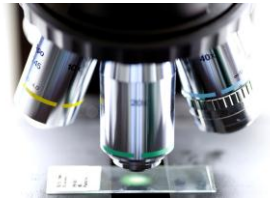
‘As the findings of the Deloitte Access Economics study present, omega-3 supplements are a highly cost-effective way to treat people who have suffered from a heart attack. Fish oil supplements offer a number of health benefits and recent negative reports in the media should not be used to scare those people who are already supplementing their diet with omega-3 fatty acids’, Dr Morrow noted.

The analysis found that fish oils supplements would achieve large net benefit of around \$1.0 billion with a high benefit-to-cost ratio of 39 to 1. Results from this analysis were comparable to previous cost-effectiveness studies and were cost effective under all of the scenarios analysed.

Whilst supporting individuals’ decisions to supplement their diet with fish oils, the CHC together with the CM Industry, strongly advocates the use of a high quality fish oil supplement, to ensure that the intake amount

¹ Melanson SF, Lewandrowski EL, Flood JG, Lewandrowski KB. Measurement of organochlorines in commercial over-the-counter fish oil preparations: implications for dietary and therapeutic recommendations for omega-3 fatty acids and a review of the literature. Arch Pathol Lab Med 2005 Jan;129(1):74-77.

² Fish oils for the secondary prevention of Coronary Heart Disease, http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Australia/Local%20Assets/Documents/Industries/LSHC/Deloitte_Fish%20oils_for_the_secondary_prevention_of_CHD.pdf



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and efficacy is assured. The CHC also advocates consumers in following instructions and dosage guidance on labels, as with any medication, and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

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