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Multivitamins Have an Important Role in Nutrition

The Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) has welcomed a statement by four well-known nutrition researchers, and published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*,¹ that multivitamins are a safe and effective way to achieve the recommended intake of essential nutrients. The statement was in response to an editorial published in the same journal that “ignored decades of nutrition research and diet monitoring of the US population” to conclude that there is no need to take multivitamins.²

“The group of nutrition researchers point out that the editorial focused on chronic disease and failed to take into account the beneficial effect of multivitamins, the primary benefit being to meet recommended dietary intakes of essential vitamins and minerals,” said Mr Carl Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of the CHC.

“Whilst the authors refer to the US population in not meeting dietary intake recommendations, here in Australia it has been well established that we, too, don’t eat as well as we should.”

“The recently published report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Australia’s eating habits shows that the typical Australian is eating plenty of food but is still starving of quality nutrients. Based on self-reporting just 6.8 per cent of the population met the recommended intake of vegetables and just over half at 54 per cent met the recommendations for serves of fruit,” said Mr Gibson.

ABS figures released in April showed around four million Australian adults were found to be Vitamin D deficient in 2011-12. Vitamin D is essential for the body to absorb calcium effectively, which is important for bone health and muscle function.

“The authors also highlight the role that multivitamins can play in improving general health and decreasing the risk of chronic disease. For example, the Physicians’ Health Study II, which is the largest randomised clinical trial of a multivitamin supplement conducted to date, showed a statistically significant 8 per cent reduction in total cancer incidence in male physicians.”³

ENDS

¹ Frei B, Ames BN, Blumberg JB, Willett WC. Enough is enough [Letter]. *Ann Intern Med.* 2014;160(11):807

² Guallar E, Stranges S, Mulrow C, Appel LJ, Miller ER 3rd. Enough is enough: Stop wasting money on vitamin and mineral supplements [Editorial]. *Ann Intern Med.* 2013;159:850-1.

³ Gaziano JM, Sesso HD, Christen WG, Bubes V, Smith JP, MacFadyen J, et al. Multivitamins in the prevention of cancer in men: the Physicians' Health Study II randomized controlled trial. *JAMA.* 2012;308:1871-80

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