

Media Release

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A New Year's Resolution: Better Health

The Complementary Healthcare Council's New Years Resolution is Better Health for all Australians. It 2014 is set to be a year with an ever-increasing burden of chronic health problems on the healthcare system. The CHC says there has never been a more important time for action.

Mr Carl Gibson, CEO of the Complementary Healthcare Council said; "More and more people are using complementary medicines to care for their general health and wellbeing. With the growing use and acceptance of complementary medicines it is important that the Australian Government provides more support for clinical and laboratory research into complementary medicines."

Mr Gibson said; "Many people take multivitamins because they know they don't always eat as well as they should, with the typical Australian diet falling well short of the recommended daily nutrient requirements. As an example, less than one in ten adults reports an adequate intake of fruit and vegetables."¹

Director of the National Institute of Complementary Medicine in Australia, Professor Alan Bensoussan, agrees, stating: "The prevalence of suboptimal or 'poor' nutrition is more widespread in the Australian community than people realise - meaning more people are at risk of frank deficiency."

A recently published study in the *The Annals of Internal Medicine* queried the role of multivitamins in the prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease in healthy individuals, and concluded that the evidence is currently insufficient to assess the value of multivitamins in the prevention of these diseases.

The study only looked at healthy subjects that did not have identified nutritional deficiencies. The findings of the study do not apply to children, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, or individuals who are chronically ill, hospitalised, or have a clinical nutritional deficiency – meaning that dietary intake is a vital yet uninvestigated aspect of this study on the effect of multivitamins.

"The inconclusive findings of the study, and the lack of focus on those individuals with identified nutritional deficiencies, highlights the urgent need for more research into complementary medicines," said Mr Gibson.

"Despite a formidable reputation as leaders in the field, we have an under-utilised resource in our complementary medicine researchers and academics in Australia. More research is needed to establish the role of multivitamins in addressing chronic health problems, and for this to happen Government support is essential."

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¹ Statistics, A.B.o., 4338.0 - *Profiles of Health, Australia, 2011-13* 2013: Canberra.

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