

[Media Release]

Natural therapies may be more effective than antidepressants

3 August 2011 - The effectiveness and safety of some natural and complementary therapies means that they may be superior to antidepressant medications for most people with depression, according to Professor Shaun Holt of Victoria University of Wellington.

These findings, which he admits were a surprise, have been published in an article in *NZ Doctor* and his new book *Depression - Natural Remedies That Really Work*. "We looked at the research evidence for antidepressant drugs and natural therapies and did not expect to find that, as some natural therapies work just as well and have fewer side effects, this makes them a potentially better choice for a lot of people with depression".

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of depression in the world and around 1 in 10 adults take antidepressant medications in many Western countries. The therapies with the best evidence included the supplement SAMe, massage therapy, meditation, yoga, expressive art therapies, light therapy, St John's Wort and B vitamins. In addition, there is a lot of research evidence on how exercise and a good diet can improve mood, for example, an Australasian study found omega-3 fish oil to be more effective than Prozac for patients with severe depression.

Professor Holt said that a number of recent studies have found that antidepressant medications are hardly better than placebo except for a small number of people with the most severe depression. In addition, studies that find no benefits and only side effects are often not published by pharmaceutical companies.

"Most of the natural therapies we discuss in the book are likely to be more acceptable to patients than antidepressant medications - no one wants to be on antidepressants if they can avoid it. Also, people can almost always safely use multiple natural therapies for additional benefits and many can be used in addition to antidepressants. Withdrawal from antidepressants can be very difficult and the use of natural therapies may help".

Please email requests for a copy of the book to holtshaun@gmail.com

More information on the book - www.tinyurl.com/depressionbook

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About Professor Shaun Holt

Qualified Doctor and Pharmacist

Adjunct Professor at Victoria University of Wellington

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One of NZ's most experienced medical researchers

Author of 2008 best-seller "*Natural Remedies that Really Work*"

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Member of International Editorial Board of medical research journal *FACT*