STATEMENT : 25/10/13

NPNZ slams study trying to link Omega-3 with heart attacks.

Dietary intake of n-3 long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids and risk of myocardial infarction in coronary artery disease patients with or without diabetes mellitus: a prospective cohort study.

The study suggests a high intake of n-3 LCPUFAs was associated with a reduced risk of acute myocardial infarction (AMI) or heart attack, independent of HbA1c, in diabetic patients, but with an increased risk of fatal AMI and lower HbA1c among patients without impaired glucose metabolism.

Natural Products New Zealand's Executive Director, Alison Quesnel, says the study's results are extremely limited and not clinically significant due to the small sample sizes of each group and the low event rate, particularly in the non-diabetes group.

"With the massive body of compelling scientific evidence demonstrating the cardiovascular benefits of EPA and DHA in healthy populations as well as those with pre-existing cardiovascular ailments, this study seriously lacks scientific credibility," says Ms Quesnel.

The methodology is questionable as there are inherent limitations to the use of food frequency questionnaires to determine food and supplement intake as well as the use of serum fatty acid levels to determine long term Omega-3 levels. There were no differences among the three groups for serum EPA and DHA and the authors of the study did not provide subject baseline characteristics among the three groups, leaving it questionable as to whether or not there were differences.

This study flies in the face of decades of robust scientific research around Omega 3 and heart health, in particular, a number of studies have shown Omega 3 fatty acids seem to stabilise the myocardium electrically, resulting in reduced susceptibility to ventricular arrhythmias, reducing the risk of heart attacks.

It is generally recognised that regular consumption of fish or dietary supplementation of fish oils rich in Omega-3 fatty acids is beneficial to heart health.

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