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Comvita trial demonstrates positive effect of Olive Leaf Extract on cardiovascular disease

Global natural health products company, Comvita (NZX:CVT) today announced the results of a human intervention trial demonstrating for the first time a positive effect between the intake of Comvita's fresh Olive Leaf Extract (OLE) and positive short-term changes in measures associated with cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The results of the study are published in the British Journal of Nutrition (BJN) and demonstrate for the first time that the application of a single recommended dose of Comvita OLE showed improvements in blood vessel function and a lower inflammatory marker in the blood. This compared to participants that received a placebo. The study was conducted on healthy patients.

The positive effect was associated with the absorption of active phenolic components from the OLE. High levels of the pro-inflammatory marker measured in this study and poor blood vessel function are some of the key contributors to the development of CVD.

Comvita CEO Brett Hewlett said: "The two-day, 18 person human intervention study is the latest in an ongoing research programme being undertaken by Comvita in collaboration with the University of Reading and other internationally recognised research institutes. This research programme is exploring the effects of Comvita's fresh OLE active phenolic components on supporting healthy cardiovascular function."

"CVD continues to be the number one cause of death globally. It has been established that most CVDs are preventable via altering diets and lifestyle," said Professor J.P.E Spencer, Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition, University of Reading and corresponding author of the study.

"This study was important to explore links between OLE components in the blood and associate with positive changes in vascular function and pro-inflammatory markers. Longer term epidemiological studies are needed to establish definitive conclusions," said Professor Spencer.

CVD is a class of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels. CVDs are the leading cause of death globally. Together they resulted in 17.3 million deaths (31.5%) in 2013 up from 12.3 million (25.8%) in 1990. Most CVDs are preventable by addressing behavioural risk factors, such as changes to diet and lifestyle. (Source: World Health Organisation).

Mr. Hewlett said: "We are involved in a research programme with world leading research organisations to establish links between OLE and its ability to support cardiovascular and other health functions. A longer and larger study of OLE targeting cardiovascular health has been conducted with publication expected this year. Additional trials are being considered on CVD and other conditions."

The study was conducted by the Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition, University of Reading. Funding for the research was equally contributed to by Comvita and an R&D Project Grant from Callaghan Innovation, the New Zealand government's business innovation agency.

The study, entitled : 'Secoiridoids delivered as olive leaf extract induce acute improvements in human vascular function and reduction of an inflammatory cytokine: randomised, double-blind placebo controlled, cross over trial' has a summary available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0007114515001269>

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Background information

About Comvita (www.comvita.com)

Comvita (NZX:CVT) is a global natural health company committed to the development of innovative products, backed by ongoing investment in scientific research. We are the world leaders in Manuka (*leptospermum*) honey and fresh-picked Olive Leaf Extract, which are at the core of the Comvita product range.

We have approximately 50% of honey supply under direct ownership or control, with the balance of supply from long term contractual and partnership arrangements. Comvita pioneered the development and use of medical grade Manuka honey and was the first to receive FDA approval (2007). We partner with US wound care company Derma Sciences, Inc. (NASDAQ:DSCI), the global licensee for Medihoney® specialist wound care products, which are used in hospitals and medical centres around the world. Comvita's freshly picked Olive Leaf Extract is grown, harvested, extracted and bottled at the world's largest specialised olive leaf grove, with over one million olive trees.

Comvita sells into more than 18 countries through a network of our own branded retail locations, online (seven country specific e-commerce websites) and third-party outlets. We have over 500 staff located in New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the USA.