

Natural Health Review™

Proven Natural Health

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Welcome to the latest edition of Natural Health Review.

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. I hope you had a wonderful and restful Christmas.

In this issue we feature two interesting studies on honey relating to its medicinal value and also its positive effect for soothing coughing children.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Kind Regards,

Dr Shaun Holt

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Aquatic exercise for knee and hip osteoarthritis

The facts:

- Aquatic exercise has some beneficial short-term effects in patients with knee and/or hip osteoarthritis, according to the pooled results of 6 trials involving 800 patients.
- Small improvements in function, quality of life and pain were seen in those patients with both hip and knee osteoarthritis, but radiographic evaluation was not performed and long-term effects were not studied.
- Aquatic exercise may be a useful first step in an exercise programme for patients with osteoarthritis, but there is a shortage of high-quality studies in this area.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Cochrane reviews such as this provide some of the strongest evidence in terms of medical research: the process in producing the reviews involves reviewing all the available data on the topic at hand. In other words, take their findings seriously! The conclusion from this review was that aquatic exercise was beneficial in the short-term, and more studies are needed to know whether it is also beneficial long-term.

<http://www.mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsysrev/articles/CD005523/frame.html>





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Effect of honey, dextromethorphan, and no treatment for coughing children

The facts:

- This study involved 105 children aged 2–18 years with upper respiratory tract infections and nocturnal symptoms, and illness who were given a single dose of buckwheat honey, honey-flavoured dextromethorphan or no treatment.
- They were surveyed by their parents on the day before any treatment was given and then again the next day after the children had taken a dose of honey or dextromethorphan, or remained untreated. .
- Parents rated honey significantly more effective than no treatment for symptomatic relief of a nocturnal cough and sleep difficulty. Dextromethorphan was found not to be as effective as honey

Dr Shaun Holt:

This is one of those “heartsink” conditions for health practitioners – the child with the tickly cough who coughs all night, keeping themselves and their family awake. This largish study found that honey was better than dextromethorphan. A single dose was given 30 minutes before bedtime. The benefits are probably a result of the honey coating the exposed nerve endings in the pharynx.

<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/161/12/1140>

Research Review acknowledges the kind support of



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Cognitive performance in elderly and dietary fish intake

The facts:

- A diet high in fish and fish products was associated with improved cognitive performance in a study involving 2031 elderly Norwegians.
- The association between daily fish intake and cognitive performance was strongly dose-dependent, i.e. the more fish in the diet, the better the cognition.
- The effect was especially obvious for non-processed lean fish and fatty fish.



Dr Shaun Holt:

If there continues to be excellent studies on the benefits of eating fish, then we'll continue to select them for inclusion! Although studies such as this one only demonstrate an association as opposed to proving a causal relationship, a dose-dependent effect adds to the strength of the data. The message from this study is clear: eat at least an average of 10g/day of fish, and ideally have an average of at least 75g/day and try to make sure that it is non-processed.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/86/5/1470>

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Honey: nutritional and medicinal value

The facts:

- A literature search has found that, in addition to its nutritional value, honey is useful for healing wounds and for treating a range of clinical conditions such as gastrointestinal or eye disorders.
- Studies show that honey has a soothing and healing effect on burns, and has been used as a wound barrier during laparoscopy in cancer patients.
- No infection has been reported after the application of honey to open wounds, so patients may consider requesting such treatment postoperatively.

Dr Shaun Holt:

More and more studies are demonstrating the therapeutic effects of honey. In particular, honey has been shown to improve wound healing and it has soothing and healing effects when applied to burns. There are many other conditions where there is good anecdotal evidence that honey is of benefit, and studies need to be undertaken to prove these benefits. There is a huge amount of research into the benefits of fish oil and it would be good to see the same amount of research effort applied to honey.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1742-1241.2007.01417.x>

Yoga therapy for patients with schizophrenia

The facts:

- A randomised study in 61 patients with moderate schizophrenia found that yoga therapy improved symptoms when used in addition to prescribed antipsychotic medication over a 4-month period.
- Psychopathology improved, as did social and work function, and quality of life.
- Physical exercise therapy was also effective in these patients, although less so than yoga therapy.

Dr Shaun Holt:

People with schizophrenia have problems perceiving reality, with symptoms such as hallucinations (sensing sounds, smells etc that are not there) and delusions (strong beliefs despite evidence that these beliefs are not true). Powerful medications are needed to control the symptoms and, not surprisingly, these medications usually have problematic side effects. This study showed that simple physical exercise, but particularly yoga, helped to reduce symptoms in patients with moderate illness.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1600-0447.2007.01032.x>



Hypnosis for nausea and vomiting in cancer chemotherapy

The facts:

- Hypnosis may be effective in the treatment of children and adults with cancer chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, according to a review of 6 randomised, controlled clinical trials.
- Hypnosis was found to be effective for patients with anticipatory as well as chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, and was at least as effective as cognitive-behavioural therapy.
- Five of the six studies had no adult participants so further research, particularly in adults, is required to confirm the results of this literature review.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Nausea and vomiting are some of the worse side effects of chemotherapy and treatments often fall short. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that hypnosis can help and this systematic review identified 6 studies that have assessed this. 5 of the studies involved children and, overall, there was strong evidence that hypnosis was of benefit. It is certainly worth trying in children and studies are needed to look at the effectiveness in adults.

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bsc/ejcc/2007/00000016/00000005/art00004;jsessionid=217c6ud1km6ak.alice>



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Ascorbic acid and asthma

The facts:

- Dietary vitamin C helped prevent exercise-induced bronchoconstriction in asthmatics participating in a small randomised, placebo-controlled crossover trial.
- Patients received vitamin C supplementation (1500 mg/day) for 2 weeks and placebo for 2 weeks separated by a 1-week washout period.
- Exercise-induced bronchoconstriction was significantly reduced by dietary vitamin C compared with placebo, and asthma symptom scores were significantly improved.

Dr Shaun Holt:

This was a small pilot study, but the results are interesting. As around 1 in 6 people have asthma in developed countries, it is well worth assessing whether modifications to diets can lead to improvements. The results of 1500mg/day supplementation with ascorbic acid were impressive. Breathing tests reduced by around 13% when the participants were taking placebo but this dropped by around half to 6.4% when they took the vitamin C.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rmed.2007.02.014>

Results of studies on the safety and efficacy of milk thistle

The facts:

- In the last 5 years, a number of clinical trials have investigated the efficacy of milk thistle in patients with liver disease, cancer, hepatitis C, HIV, hypercholesterolaemia and diabetes.
- The herb appears to have promising effects against certain types of cancer and liver disease, and is known to be safe and well tolerated.
- Experimental and clinical studies suggest that the herb may have also have antidiabetic and cardioprotective effects.



Dr Shaun Holt:

Milk thistle extracts have been thought of as a treatment for liver diseases for many years and recently there have been a number of studies looking at other potential health benefits. Promising results have been demonstrated in studies of patients with cancer, diabetes and liver disorders. However, until there are more results from studies it is too early to recommend this product for these conditions, perhaps with the exception of liver diseases such as hepatitis.

<http://ict.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/6/2/146>



Independent commentary and selection of studies by Dr Shaun Holt, BPharm (hons), MBChB (hons)

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Could high folate intake help lower breast cancer incidence?

The facts:

- A high intake of dietary folate was associated with a lower incidence of breast cancer in postmenopausal women in the Malmö Diet and Cancer cohort.
- The cohort comprised 11699 postmenopausal women who were followed for an average 9.5 years, during which time 392 incidents of invasive breast cancer were reported.
- The risk of invasive breast cancer in women in the highest quintile of dietary folate intake was 44% lower than that in women in the lowest quintile.

Dr Shaun Holt:

We should always be cautious about the findings of associations in studies such as this one – as I have pointed out previously, associations may be due to chance. Bearing this in mind, this huge study of over 11,000 women aged 50 or over found a strong link between high folate intake and a lower chance of getting breast cancer. Similar findings have been observed for other cancers and hearing loss and so a folate supplement is definitely one to consider for older people.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/86/2/434>

Morning light therapy for postpartum depression



The facts:

- Six weeks' treatment with bright light therapy (10,000 lux) significantly improved patient and clinician-reported symptoms in a group of 10 women with postpartum depression.
- Dim red light (600 lux) was also effective in a comparator group of 5 women.
- Light therapy may therefore be useful in women with post partum depression, particularly those who refuse drug treatment.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Depression after giving birth is very common: somewhere between 5% and 25% of women are affected. Many women have never previously had depression and may not believe the diagnosis, and for various reasons they may not want to take anti-depressive medications. Therefore there is a need for simple non-pharmacological treatments and light therapy could be the answer. Its benefits are well documented for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and this small study suggests bright light therapy may be the answer but more research is needed before a strong recommendation can be made.

<http://apt.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/abstract/13/4/312>

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