

Primary Provider Network Newsletter Winter 2007

Omega-3 Fatty Acid and Alzheimer's Disease

Epidemiologic studies have shown that eating fish more than one time a week decreases risk of developing Alzheimer's disease in older persons. Why fish consumption reduces the Alzheimer's disease risk is uncertain; however, omega-3 fatty acids seem to play a prominent role. Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is the most prominent omega-3 fatty acid in the brain and has structural and signaling roles.

DHA supplementation is "generally recognized as safe" by the Food and Drug Administration. It currently is added to infant formulas to promote brain development. DHA supplementation has been shown to have neuroprotective and anti-amyloid effects in animals. A recent 6-month, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of omega-3 fatty acid supplementation in Sweden with 200 participants with Alzheimer's disease did not show a change in cognitive measures. However, six months may have been too short for changes in cognitive outcomes to occur.


Sponsored by the National Institute on Aging, the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study group (ADCS) is starting to enroll participants with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease in an 18 month, randomized (60% DHA, 40% placebo), double-blind, multicenter study to determine if supplementation with 2 grams of DHA daily slows the progression of cognitive decline. Secondary outcomes will examine the effects of DHA on brain MRI over the course of a year and on various biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease and oxidative stress.

This study addresses important questions that may advance our understanding of Alzheimer's disease treatments. We would like to offer this study as an opportunity to augment the care you provide to your patients with Alzheimer's disease. Please contact me at (312) 563-2902 or at Raj_C_Shah@rush.edu if you would like further information about this or other studies at the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center.

Since establishing the Primary Provider Network in 1987, the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center is committed to increasing health professional awareness about memory loss. It is our hope that through education, research and clinical service, we can help to improve the quality of care individuals with memory difficulties and their families receive. We continually strive to be accessible for primary providers in Illinois. One method is through the Primary Provider Newsletter. If you would like to be REMOVED from our mailing list, please contact Dr. Raj C. Shah at (312) 563-2902 or Raj_C_Shah@rush.edu.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Below are some of the ongoing clinical studies at the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center. Please contact Julie Bach, study coordinator, at (312) 942-8264 if you have patients who qualify for the following studies:

Condition Studied	Study Drug or Intervention	Design	Eligibility Criteria
Mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease 	Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), an omega-3 supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-month study • Placebo-controlled • Cognitive testing • Laboratory testing • Brain Imaging (MRI) • Visits with Study Physician • Caregiver needed • Home visits possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease • MMSE 14-26 • Male or Female 50 years • Not living in nursing home
Sleep disturbances in Mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease	Rozerem™ (ramelteon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12-week study • Placebo-controlled • Home sleep monitoring • Laboratory testing • Visits with Study Physician • Caregiver needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease • Male or Female 55+ years
Neuroimaging and Cognition Study	Examining brain imaging markers for memory changes with aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year study • Annual cognitive testing • MRI every two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild Cognitive Impairment • Male or Female 65+ years
Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative	Examining blood, urine, cerebral spinal fluid, and brain imaging markers for memory changes with aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year study • Semi-annual cognitive testing • MRI scans annually • Laboratory testing • Visits with Study Physician • Caregiver needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild Cognitive Impairment • Male or Female 55-90 years
Mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease	Huperzine A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-month study • Placebo-controlled • Cognitive testing • Laboratory testing • Visits with Study Physician • Caregiver needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease • Male or Female 55+ years • No Aricept, Razadyne, Exelon for 3 months prior to screening