



HSIS Comments on the positive role of fish oil in reducing the risk of severe mental disorders

February 1, 2010 A 12 week course of fish oil capsules reduced people's risk of developing severe psychotic disorders according to a paper published in the February issue of *Archives of General Psychiatry*¹.

Commenting on the trial, Dr Ruxton from the Health Supplements Information Service notes: "This was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, clinical trial in 81 people all of whom were at extremely high risk of becoming 'psychotic'. These individuals therefore either had mild psychotic symptoms, transient psychosis or a family history of psychotic disorders plus a decrease in mental functioning. These criteria identify individuals whose risk of becoming psychotic may be as high as 40 percent in a 12-month period, say the researchers.

"For a duration of 12 weeks, 41 of the individuals were assigned to take daily fish oil capsules containing 1.2 grams of long chain omega-three polyunsaturated fatty acids and 40 were assigned to take placebo. Compliance was high: a total of 76 (93.8 percent) individuals completed the intervention. By the end of the study, two (4.9 percent) in the fish oil group and 11 (27.5 percent) in the placebo group had developed a psychotic disorder. The difference between the two groups – fish oil and placebo – for progression to psychosis was 22.6 percent.

"Calculations done by the authors suggest that for those in the high risk group for developing psychosis, giving them an omega-3 supplement would be a reasonably efficient way of reducing their chance of developing psychosis. The fish oil capsules also significantly reduced symptoms and improved mental functioning compared with placebo. Rates of adverse effects were minimal and similar between the two groups.

"If this finding is confirmed in further studies, it could have a very positive impact for people at risk of developing psychosis. However, the effective dose used in this study – 1.2 grams daily – is almost three times the recommended daily intake² and would not easily be obtainable from the diet. In this case, a fish oil supplement represents the most efficient way to obtain this amount of long chain omega 3 polyunsaturated fatty acids on a daily basis."

-ends-

¹ Archives of General Psychiatry. 2010;67[2]:146-154

² 0.45g per day as recommended by the UK's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (2004) "Advice on fish consumption: benefits and risks". London: The Stationery Office.