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Inaccurate Reporting on Recent Omega-3 DHA Alzheimer's Study Reveals Misrepresentation by Media

DARTMOUTH, NS (Ocean Nutrition Canada) – Several media outlets published articles last week suggesting that Omega-3 fish oil supplements fail to show positive results for Alzheimer's patients. This reporting by media outlets came after the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published the study "*Docosahexaenoic Acid Supplementation and Cognitive Decline in Alzheimer Disease: A Randomized Trial*", where researchers reported that "Supplementation with DHA compared with placebo did not slow the rate of cognitive and functional decline in patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer disease."

Fish oil was not used in the study and, in fact, the study clearly states that the research was performed using algal oil (which contains only DHA, whereas fish oil contains both EPA and DHA). The findings of the study are being inaccurately reported in the media, with ambiguous, misleading headlines and incorrect content.

"It is disappointing to see inaccurate misrepresentation of the facts by the media. As an example, many media outlets are leading with pictures of fish oil capsules, and using inaccurate and attention-grabbing headlines such as "*Fish oil ingredient doesn't slow Alzheimer's*" when it is very clear that the product used in the study was algal oil." stated Robert Orr, Chairman of Ocean Nutrition Canada.

It has long been postulated that both Omega-3 EPA and DHA are required to influence cognitive performance. This new study suggests that DHA alone does not appear to be the solution. It should be noted that, to date, most research studies on Alzheimer's and Omega-3 fatty acids with favorable outcomes have involved fish oil or fish consumption. A well designed study should have included fish oil products with both high EPA levels and balanced EPA and DHA content. Although DHA is a major component of the brain, it should not be automatically concluded that other fatty acids have no potential role in cognitive performance.

It should also be noted that the new study was conducted in patients with pre-existing Alzheimer's; therefore improvements would be difficult or impossible to measure. Unfortunately there is no cure for Alzheimer's. There is, however, a large body of research investigating fatty fish consumption and supplementation with fish oil, which supports possible benefits of EPA and DHA in maintaining a healthy cognitive state. Most research to date suggests that intervention is most effective at the earliest stages of cognitive decline or even before impairment is observed.

Of course the real loser in all this is the consumer, who now must attempt to compare this inaccurate, selectively reported information with the previous positive research papers published on Omega-3 EPA and DHA from fish oil.

What we do know is that Omega-3 EPA and DHA is perhaps the biggest dietary deficiency in the western diet. So much so that the EU Health Authorities recently established a Dietary Reference Value (DRV) of 250mg per day of EPA and DHA. They have also recently issued positive assessments on several health claims for EPA and DHA. In addition, it is also expected that updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans scheduled to be issued in December will include recommendations for the daily intake of fatty fish equivalent to 250mg EPA plus DHA per day. There is a health care crisis in North America and we look forward to continued future findings from credible studies looking at the potential benefits of combined Omega-3 EPA and DHA in improving health and well being.

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About Ocean Nutrition Canada Limited (ONC):

Ocean Nutrition Canada (ONC) is a privately held company, whose major shareholder is Clearwater Fine Foods Incorporated. Clearwater Fine Foods Incorporated is a diversified holding/investment company whose significant holdings include a controlling interest in Clearwater Seafood's Limited Partnership, the world's largest integrated shellfish harvester and processor.

ONC is the world's largest supplier of Omega-3 EPA and DHA ingredients from fish oil, marketed into the dietary supplement and food manufacturing markets. To date MEG-3® ingredients have been included in almost 90 billion servings of food and supplement products worldwide. For more information about ONC visit www.ocean-nutrition.com, and for information on the health benefits of MEG-3® ingredients please visit www.meg-3.com.

About Omega-3:

Omega-3 is a family of essential fatty acids (EFA), including EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid), DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), and ALA (alpha-linolenic acid). Oily fish (such as sardines, anchovies, mackerel, and salmon) are the major known natural sources of Omega-3 EPA and DHA. ALA is found in plants, such as flax and chia. It is important to note that EPA and DHA are the primary contributors of the many health benefits associated with Omega-3. While the body can convert ALA into EPA and DHA, it does so very inefficiently (typically less than one percent), making it difficult to derive Omega-3-related health benefits from plant sourced ALA. Furthermore, although Omega-3 EPA and DHA is important to overall good health, the human body is not able to produce sufficient quantities on its own, so regular consumption of these essential nutrients is required and achieved by either by eating oily fish or foods fortified with Omega-3 EPA and DHA, or by taking fish oil supplements. Learn more about the health benefits of Omega-3 EPA and DHA at www.meg-3.com.