In the NEWS

Curcumin, Quercetin May Help Fight Colon Cancer

Curcumin, a component of the curry spice turmeric, and quercetin, an antioxidant found in fruits and vegetables, may help fight colon cancer, concludes a promising new study.¹²

Scientists studied a small group of patients with familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), an inherited form of precancerous polyps in the lower bowel. People with this condition tend to develop hundreds of colorectal polyps, or adenomas, and eventually colon cancer. For six months, individuals with FAP received regular doses of curcumin (480 mg, three times daily) and quercetin (20 mg, three times daily). After six months, their average number of polyps dropped by a remarkable 60%, and the average polyp size decreased by 51%.

While previous studies have suggested that curcumin and quercetin may help prevent or fight colon cancer, this study was the first to demonstrate their efficacy against FAP. Although the substances were administered together, the scientists believe that curcumin is the key agent in protecting against the development of colon cancer.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

High Blood Pressure Heightens Risk of Dementia

Individuals who have elevated systolic blood pressure in midlife have an increased risk of dementia in later life, according to scientists at the National Institute on Aging.¹⁴

Systolic blood pressure, which is the pressure that occurs when the heart contracts, is expressed as the upper number in a person’s blood pressure measurement. Scientists assessed the blood pressure of middle-aged Japanese-American men in the early 1970s and followed them through the late 1990s. They found that those with higher midlife systolic blood pressure had a greater risk of developing dementia later in life. Individuals whose midlife systolic blood pressure was over 140 mmHg had the greatest risk. Midlife systolic pressure of 120-139 mmHg increased dementia risk to a lesser degree, while pressure below 120 mmHg was associated with the lowest risk. The risk for dementia was highest for those who had never been treated for high blood pressure.

These findings suggest that the processes leading to dementia begin many years before the condition manifests, and that preventing and treating high blood pressure in middle-aged adults may help reduce their risk of developing dementia later in life.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

FDA Scientists Asked to Alter Scientific Data

Almost 20% of 997 FDA scientists surveyed by the Union of Concerned Scientists “have been asked, for nonscientific reasons, to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information or their conclusions in a FDA scientific document.”¹³ Moreover, 40% stated that they feared retaliation for expressing safety concerns in public, and more than a third did not feel they could express safety concerns even within the agency.

Sixty-one percent of respondents knew of instances in which Department of Health and Human Services or FDA political appointees had inappropriately entered into FDA determinations or actions. Additionally, 60% were aware of cases in which “commercial interests have inappropriately induced or attempted to induce the reversal, withdrawal, or modification of FDA determinations or actions.” When asked whether they agreed that the “FDA routinely provides complete and accurate information to the public” and “FDA leadership is as committed to product safety as it is to bringing products to the market,” fewer than half of the scientists responded positively.

The Union of Concerned Scientists called on the FDA to increase accountability and transparency, as well as to protect researchers who speak out when scientific data are manipulated. Furthermore, the group recommends that all federal agencies have fully functioning, independent advisory committees and be held accountable by Congress.

—Dayna Dye