**IN THE NEWS**

**New Media Campaign Highlights Dangers of Maternal Vitamin D Deficiency**

In the April 2009 issue, *Life Extension* magazine published a detailed article linking falling levels of vitamin D over the past 20 years with the rising incidence of autism. To ensure this breakthrough information reaches Ob/Gyn doctors, leading vitamin D researcher, Dr. John Cannell, is launching a media campaign to raise awareness of maintaining adequate levels of vitamin D during pregnancy. His message is echoed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which stated recently:

"Given the growing evidence that adequate maternal vitamin D status is essential during pregnancy, not only for maternal well-being but also for fetal development, health care professionals who provide obstetric care should consider assessing maternal vitamin D status by measuring the 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentrations of pregnant women."

Scientists fear that many pregnant women mistakenly believe they are getting enough vitamin D from prenatal vitamins. The sad reality is that low levels of maternal vitamin D can affect fetal development and may contribute to autism, which does not manifest itself until several years after birth. Mounting evidence also indicates that extra vitamin D is needed during pregnancy, with recent research revealing that pregnant women may need as much as 6,000 IU of vitamin D per day.

Dr. Cannell’s campaign is being sponsored by the Vitamin D Council. Targeting both print and television media, it will stress the critical need for specialists to diagnose and aggressively treat maternal vitamin D deficiency.

---

**Nutritional Supplement Plus Testosterone May Help Keep Seniors Out of the Hospital**

A recent report from the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition describes a study that a combination of testosterone and an oral nutritional supplement containing protein may help keep undernourished older individuals out of the hospital.

Forty-nine undernourished men and women were provided with dietary advice and assigned one of the following: testosterone, a nutritional supplement containing 18% protein, both testosterone and the nutritional supplement, or no treatment for one year.

Over the course of the year, 13 participants had a total of 18 hospital admissions, and two deaths occurred. Among the 11 participants who received both testosterone and supplemental nutritional therapy, there were no hospital admissions or deaths.

"Because hospitalizations are a common and serious event in undernourished older people, this is an exciting finding of considerable potential benefit to many people," the authors concluded.

—Dayna Dye


**Mediterranean Diet Associated With Reduction in Deaths From Heart Attack and Stroke**

A recent article from the journal *Circulation* reports an association between greater adherence to a Mediterranean diet and a reduction in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke in women.

Teresa T. Fung, ScD, and colleagues evaluated data from 74,886 women participating in the Nurses’ Health Study. Questionnaires were scored for adherence to the Mediterranean diet, which is characterized by a high intake of vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, fish, and monounsaturated fat.

Over two decades of follow-up, women whose scores were in the top 20% of participants had a 29% lower risk of heart disease, a 42% lower risk of fatal heart disease, a 13% lower risk of stroke, and a 31% lower risk of fatal stroke, compared with women whose scores were lowest.

The authors acknowledge the need for their results to be replicated in other populations, particularly men.

—Dayna Dye
