RESEARCH

No cardiovascular benefit from fish oil for high risk adults

Fish oils did nothing for Italian adults with multiple cardiovascular risk factors in a recent trial. Those who took the 1 g capsules every day for a median of five years were no less likely to die or be admitted to hospital with cardiovascular disease than controls who took an equal measure of olive oil instead (11.7% (733/6239) v 11.9% (745/6266); adjusted hazard ratio 0.97, 95% CI 0.88 to 1.08). The results were a disappointment because fish oils do benefit people with myocardial infarction or heart failure, say the authors, mostly by reducing the risk of sudden cardiac death.

Participants in the latest trial had no history of myocardial infarction and very few had heart failure, but they did have hypertension, hypercholesterolaemia, diabetes, obesity, other risk factors, or clinical evidence of atherosclerosis. The two groups had almost identical cardiovascular outcomes over five years, say the authors. Secondary analyses hinted at possible benefits for women and a reduction in hospital admission for heart failure associated with fish oil, but the authors warn that both results should be treated with caution.

For now, we must assume that extra fish oil doesn’t help prevent cardiovascular death or disease in high risk adults without myocardial infarction, they write—at least not in Italy. About three quarters of these participants regularly ate oily fish.

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Antibody against RSV helps prevent wheeze in infants

Palivizumab is a monoclonal antibody directed against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and an effective prophylactic against severe infection in high risk infants. A new trial in preterm infants in the Netherlands. If preventing RSV also prevents wheeze in the first year of life, we might reasonably explore whether RSV prophylaxis can reduce the risk of persistent wheezing or asthma later in childhood, say the authors, who funded jointly by Abbot Laboratories and the government of the Netherlands.

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Link between relationship violence and depression works both ways

Researchers trying to disentangle the complex association between physical abuse by an intimate partner and poor mental health in young women. A new trial in preterm infants that measured both, mostly in women and girls. The association seemed to work both ways—violence by an intimate partner increased the odds of later depression (odds ratio 1.97, 95% CI 1.56 to 2.48) and symptoms of depression increased the odds of later violence (1.93, 1.51 to 2.48. In the limited number of studies that included men, they found an association between violence and later depression, not the reverse.

Together the studies looked at more than 36000 participants, followed up for one to five years. Most studies considered only physical or sexual violence and looked for depressive symptoms rather than a diagnosis of major depression. Three studies reported a positive association between violence by an intimate partner and suicide attempts in women.

Although violence may cause symptoms of depression, and symptoms of depression may also predispose women to violence, it’s still possible that some as yet unidentified factor causes both, say the authors. Few of these studies adjusted their analyses for important confounders such as use of alcohol or childhood adversity, including sexual abuse.

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