Fish Oil Supplements an Issue in Cardiac Surgery

BY DAMIAN McNAMARA

MIAMI BEACH — Patients who take omega-3 fatty acid fish oil supplements before cardiac surgery might be more likely to need platelet transfusions than would those who do not, a retrospective study indicates.

"At this point, it's advisable to stop fish oil before surgery to reduce the risk of bleeding," Marc Reichert, Pharm.D., said during a poster rounds session at the annual congress of the Society of Critical Care Medicine.

Dr. Reichert and colleagues at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C., compared platelet transfusion requirements between 75 patients who took a fish oil supplement 24 hours or less before surgery and 75 controls who did not. Whether or not a patient otherwise took the supplements (for example, chronically) was not assessed.

They found that 29% of the fish oil group vs. 17% of the controls received at least one transfusion with platelets intraoperatively or within 24 hours postoperatively. This difference was significant. The fish oil group was transfused with a larger mean volume of platelets perioperatively (205 mL, compared with 30 mL in the control group), a difference that also was significant.

All patients underwent cardiac surgery between July 2006 and July 2008. Mean dose of fish oil was 1,848 mg (range, 500-6,000 mg). Controls were propensity matched with the treatment patients; there were no significant differences in baseline demographic or intraoperative or postoperative clinical variables. Mean patient age was 64 years. Men accounted for 80% of the fish oil group and 72% of the control group. ■