Flaxseed Supplements Curbed Hot Flashes in Study

BY BRUCE JANCIN Denver Bureau

SAN ANTONIO — Flaxseed relieved vasomotor hot flashes in postmenopausal women in a randomized blinded crossover trial, Lorraine E. Turner, Ph.D., reported at the annual breast cancer symposium sponsored by the Cancer Therapy and Research Center.

Although the study wasn't conducted in women with a history of breast cancer, the

seasonale

observed benefits suggest that flaxseed could be a useful treatment alternative in such patients, who frequently experience hot flashes exacerbated by adjuvant chemotherapy and/or hormone therapy with tamoxifen, observed Dr. Turner of the University of Manchester, England.

The predicament breast cancer patients face with regard to hot flashes is that hormone therapy is the most effective treatment for these estrogen deficiency-related symptoms, but there is concern that such therapy might increase the risk of breast cancer recurrence.

Dr. Turner reported on 85 postmenopausal women who experienced at least five hot flashes and/or night-sweat episodes per 24 hours. They were randomized to 40 g/day of flaxseed food supplements or placebo for 3 months and then crossed over to the opposite treatment arm for another 3 months of

The median number of hot flashes

dropped by 38% during flaxseed supplementation from a baseline of 208 per month, with placebo showing no significant effect. The decline in hot flashes correlated with a rise in enterodiol, enterolactone, and other urinary lignan markers. Lignans are a type of phytoestrogen abun-

Flaxseed could be a useful treatment alternative in breast cancer patients, who frequently experience hot flashes exacerbated by chemotherapy.

dant in flaxseed. Laboratory work performed on a monthly basis showed that flaxseed supplementation was associated with significant reductions serum FSH and Apo-A1, but no changes were seen in serum total choles-

terol, triglycerides, growth hormone, LH, prolactin levels, or markers of bone turnover.

Nor was flaxseed associated with any thyroid function abnormalities. This is an important observation, because although soy isoflavones previously have been shown to reduce hot flashes while improving serum lipid profiles and enhancing bone mineral density, there is some evidence to suggest isoflavones can cause hypothyroidism, she said.

Dr. Turner's study was funded by the Food Standards Agency of the United Kingdom.

SAN ANTONIO — The more years of formal education a breast cancer patient has, the more likely she is to use complementary and alternative medicine in conjunction with adjuvant chemotherapy,

Eleanor Glass reported at the annual breast cancer symposium sponsored by the Cancer Therapy and Research Center. Her survey of 700 breast cancer pa-

tients who received chemotherapy and/or adjuvant hormone therapy showed that the majority-55%-used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) be-

fore, during, or afterward. A total of 27% of patients reported using CAM during all

CAM usage was strongly related to education level. Overall, 30% of patients without a high school degree reported using CAM, as did 50% with a high school degree, more than two-thirds of women with a college degree, and 70% with graduate education, said Ms. Glass of the Uni-

The most commonly used CAM therapies, in descending order of frequency, were vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin B₆,

green tea, selenium, echinacea, garlic ex-

three time periods.

versity of Cincinnati.

rual) were similar over one year of treatment for	Seasonale.	Cycle I (IV=303)	Gyüle 4 (14=201)
nale ^{to} subjects and subjects on the 28-day cycle regimen.	≥7 days	65%	42%
ny case of bleeding irregularities, nonhormonal causes always be considered and adequate diagnostic meas-	≥ 20 days	35%	15%
ken to rule out malignancy or pregnancy.	28-day regimen	Cycles 1-4 (N=194)	Cycles 10-13 (N=158)
event of amenorrhea, pregnancy should be ruled out.	≥7 days	38%	39%
women may encounter post-pill amenorrhea or	≥ 20 days	6%	4%
enorrhea (pośsibly with anovulation), especially when condition was preexistent.	* Based on spotting and/or bleeding on days 1-84 of a 91 day cycle in the Seasonale subjects and days 1-21 of a 28 day cycle over 4 cycles in the		
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CAM Usage Climbs With **Education Level**

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tract, soy supplements, and ginkgo biloba. -Bruce Jancin