

Science Update

NIH Study: Glucosamine/Chondroitin Combo “Effective”

Initial findings of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Glucosamine/Chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT), long awaited by the dietary supplement industry, conclude that the combination of glucosamine and chondroitin “is effective in treating moderate to severe knee pain due to osteoarthritis (OA).”

Study results were presented at last month’s annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) in San Diego. Based at the University of Utah, the six-month GAIT trial tested whether glucosamine and chondroitin used separately or in combination, and in comparison to placebo and celecoxib, are effective in reducing pain and improving functional ability in patients with knee OA. It recruited nearly 1,600 OA patients ages 40 to 80.

The best results were reported in patients with moderate to severe pain who took the glucosamine/chondroitin combo. Almost 80 percent reported experiencing about 20 percent less pain.

“The supplements glucosamine and chondroitin offer effective treatment to the millions of Americans who suffer from [OA],” said Jason Theodosakis, M.D., a member of the steering committee for the \$14 million NIH study. “One very significant finding of GAIT is that the supplements actually outperformed the prescription drug for those with moderate to severe knee pain thus offering relief for those who need it most.”

“This study offers us another alternative, and that’s what it’s really all about - alternatives in treatment,” Crystal S. Wright, vice president of Leiner Health Products of Carson, Ca, told reporters.

Leiner supplies 43 percent of the nation’s glucosamine/chondroitin store brands.

“This gold-standard NIH-sponsored study adds to the strong body of human clinical trials that supports the use of glucosamine and chondroitin for significant and long-lasting relief of joint pain and improvements in mobility,” said Dr. Andre Shao, vice president for scientific and regulatory affairs at the Council for Responsible Nutrition, based in Washington, DC. “The body of science demonstrates that these supplements are both safe and beneficial for joint health.”

Amid the enthusiastic response, industry attorney Marc Ullman of the New York City-based law firm Ullman, Shapiro & Ullman sounded a note of caution: “Please remember that these results will not change FDA’s [the Food and Drug Administration’s] position that claims concerning joint pain will cause a supplement to be considered an unapproved new drug,” he said. FDA has declined to authorize a qualified health claim for glucosamine, chondroitin, or a combination of the two

[The Efficacy of Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate in Patients with Painful Knee Osteoarthritis (OA): The Glucosamine/Chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT) Abstract, October 1005.]

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