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Healthy oil components may fight pancreatitis

By Nathan Gray, 03-Jan-2012

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Fatty acids and phytochemicals found in fish oil and olive oil have been shown to block cellular mechanisms involved in the development of acute pancreatitis, say researchers.

The study – partially published in *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* – report that oleic acid and hydroxytyrosol affect cellular mechanisms involved in the development of acute pancreatitis by altering the make-up of cell membranes.

The research team, led by María Belén López Millán of the University of Granada, Spain, examined the role of the Mediterranean diet ingredients in the prevention and reduction of cell damage.



"There is increasing evidence that there are oxidative-inflammatory processes involved in the origin of chronic diseases and that diet plays an important role in such processes," said López Millán

"The antioxidant (phenolic compounds) and antiinflammatory (omega-3 fatty acids) effects of diet components (nutrients and bioactive compounds) prevent/mitigate the pathological incidence of oxidative-inflammatory processes," she affirmed.

The team concluded that oleic acid and hydroxytyrosol could be considered potential functional ingredients, as they may prevent or mitigate acute pancreatitis.

Research details

The research team developed an in vitro experimental model that allowed them to evaluate how changes in dietary fat ingested affected changes in the membrane fatty acid composition. They noted that membrane composition directly affects the ability of cells to respond to oxidative-inflammatory damage, such as in acute pancreatitis.

They found that the oleic acid and hydroxytyrosol – both of which are present in a particularly high concentration in virgin olive oil and omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids – offered protection from inflammatory damage from induced pancreatitis in pancreatic cells.

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The study, said to be the first study to examine how fatty acids and antioxidants affect cellular mechanisms that respond to local inflammation in the pancreas, reported that the fatty acid and phytochemical components of healthy oils such as omega-3 rich fish oil and virgin olive oil show potential for use as individual functional ingredients.

Keyw ords: fish oil, olive oil, pancreatitis, omega-3, inflammation

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