

NPA Responds to Findings of Study on Cancer Risk Among Smokers Taking Vitamin B Supplements

By Nicholas Saraceno, Vitamin Retailer



The Natural Products Association (NPA) has rejected a study by researchers blaming vitamin B use by male smokers for an increased risk of cancer. Dan Fabricant, PhD, president and CEO of NPA pointed to environmental factors and tobacco use as the more likely cause for increased cancer risk. Fabricant is a former head of the Dietary Supplement Division at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Epidemiologists from The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James), Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and National Taiwan University reported their findings in the Aug. 22, 2017 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

In the study, Theodore Brasky, PhD, of the OSUCCC – James and colleagues analyzed data from more than 77,000 patients participants in the VITamins And Lifestyle (VITAL) cohort study, a long-term prospective observational study designed to evaluate vitamin and other mineral supplements in relation to cancer risk. All participants were aged between 50 and 76 were recruited in the state of Washington between the years 2000 and 2002. Upon enrolling in the study, participants reported information to researchers about B-vitamin usage over the past 10 years. This included dosage information—a critical but often missing detail needed for strong risk assessment and association research.

For this new analysis, researchers used statistical techniques to adjust for numerous factors including: personal smoking history, age, race, education, body size, alcohol consumption,

personal history of cancer or chronic lung disease, family history of lung cancer and use of anti-inflammatory drugs.

“This sets all of these other influencing factors as equal, so we are left with a less confounded effect of long-term B6 and B12 super-supplementation,” said Brasky. “Our data shows that taking high doses of B6 and B12 over a very long period of time could contribute to lung cancer incidence rates in male smokers. This is certainly a concern worthy of further evaluation.”

“People who want to avoid cancer should avoid using tobacco, because smoking causes lung cancer, not vitamin B,” said Fabricant. “This study is flawed and ignores the potential for a host of other environmental factors and causes. Millions of healthy individuals use vitamins and supplements, including vitamin B to support their lifestyles.”

For more information, visit www.npainfo.org or www.cancer.osu.edu.