NUTRA ingredients.com
Circulation: 104,561
July 13, 2006

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Pycnogenol outperforms drug in CVI trial

13/07/2006- **A new study has shown Pycnogenol to be more effective than a conventional drug in reducing the symptoms of chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), adding to 35 years of research into the benefits of the antioxidant derived from French pine bark.**

Pyconogenol supplements have previously been shown to boost circulation, and CVI is caused by leg veins' inability to pump blood back to the heart. It can lead to the legs and ankles becoming swollen (edema) since the valves are unable to contain the excess blood, which seeps into the tissue.

If left untreated, it can lead to varicose veins, spider veins, pain during walking, and the life threatening condition deep vein thrombosis.

The new prospective controlled study was conducted by researchers at L'Aquila University, Italy, and published in the journal *Clinical and Applied Thrombosis/Hematosis* (2006 Apr;12(2):205-12). Researchers led by Peter Rohdewald, PhD, assigned 86 participants with severe CVI to one of three groups. One group received 150mg of Pycnogenol per day for eight weeks, another 300mg of Pycnogenol, and the third 1000mg of Daflon, a combination of diosmin and hesperidin commonly prescribed for the condition.

The effects were assessed by measurement of ankle swelling before 10am and again after 30 minutes of resting with elevated feet (swelling can be exacerbated by standing, so it was important that the assessments took place early in the day). Measurements were the beginning of the study and at the four- and eight-week points.

Throughout the study the participants reported on edema, pain, restless limbs, subjective swelling and skin alternations, and a secondary evaluation of edema was given by another physician. Sensors were also attached to the skin in order for the transdermal oxygen and carbon dioxide concentration to be measured.

After 4 weeks a significant level of improvement was seen in most of the Pycnogenol patients, but only in six subjects in the Daflon group.

At the end of the eight weeks, the Pycnogenol patients were seen to have a 35 per cent decrease in ankle swellings, compared to only a 19 per cent decrease in Daflon patients. The composite reduction in edema and other symptoms was 64 per cent with Pycnogenol and only 32 per cent

with Daflon.

Moreover, the Pycnogenol was seen to significantly increase tissue oxygen and lower CO2 – and effect that suggests increased blood circulation. The same effect was not seen with the Daflon.

Interestingly, the 300mg Pyconogenol dose did not yield significantly better results than 150mg, except when it came to composite edema score, which increased with the dose.

"Pycnogenol has demonstrated its efficacy and safety in several clinical trials and symptoms of CVI have been reduced significantly by Pycnogenol in controlled studies. We were pleased to see that not only did Pycnogenol decrease CVI symptoms, but the results were significantly more successful then the prescription drug used for treating CVI," said Rohdewald.

Made by Horphag research and distributed by Natural Health Science in the US, Pycnogenol has been claimed to have beneficial effects on a wide range of medical conditions including diabetes, asthma and ADHD. It has also been proposed to boost male fertility and improve the memory of mice.

The product is extracted from the bark of the Maritime pine that grows on the southern coast of France, and is currently used in over 400 dietary supplements, multi-vitamins and health products.

The biggest markets are the US and Japan, but following agreements between Horphag and three new clients in Asia - Sun Pharmaceuticals, Alkem Laboratories and Ochoa Laboratories – India is expected to become a significant third, creating demand for around 1,000 kg of the ingredient this year.

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