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

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-

alternative in breast cancer patients, who frequently experience hot flashes exacerbated by chemotherapy.

work 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

Dr. Turner's study was funded by the Kingdom.

Food Standards Agency of the United

Flaxseed could be a useful treatment

hypothyroidism, she said.

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 patients who received chemotherapy and/or adjuvant hormone therapy showed that the majority-55%-used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) before, during, or afterward. A total of 27% of patients reported using CAM during all three time periods.

CAM usage was strongly related to edversity of Cincinnati.

The most commonly used CAM therapies, in descending order of frequency, were vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin B₆, green tea, selenium, echinacea, garlic extract, soy supplements, and ginkgo biloba.

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CAM Usage Climbs With **Education Level**

ucation 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-

-Bruce Jancin