

Lewin Group Findings Show Cost Savings, Health Benefits for Five Selected Dietary Supplements: Calcium, Folic Acid, Omega-3 Fatty Acids, Glucosamine and Saw Palmetto

Washington, DC – September 22, 2004 – A study released today shows that daily use of calcium would prevent 734,000 hip fractures and save \$13.9 billion in health care costs over the next five years. Daily use of folic acid by women would prevent 600 cases of neural tube birth defects yearly, saving \$1.3 billion in lifetime medical costs over five years.

Omega-3 fatty acids, glucosamine and saw palmetto supplements showed substantial promise for improving health and quality of life and potentially reducing health care costs.

The study, commissioned by the Dietary Supplement Education Alliance and conducted by The Lewin Group, included a systematic literature review of the most rigorous scientific research available.

Key study findings include:

- ⊙ **Calcium:** The estimate of the five-year (2005-2009) net savings in hospital, nursing facility, and physician expenditures resulting from a reduction in the occurrence of hip fractures among those over age 65, through daily intake of 1200 mg of calcium with vitamin D is \$13.9 billion. Approximately 734,000 hip fractures could be avoided over the five year period.
- ⊙ **Folic Acid:** If just 10.5 million women of childbearing age began taking 400 mcg of folic acid daily, approximately 600 fewer babies would be born with neural tube defects per year, saving as much as \$321,853,000 as a result. Taking into account the very low cost of the supplement, \$1.3 billion in lifetime medical costs could potentially be saved over the next five years.
- ⊙ **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Recent studies have shown that omega-3 fatty acids can have beneficial effects on cardiovascular disease (CVD), and Lewin's review found consistent evidence that omega-3 fatty acids help reduce deaths from CVD. The research literature contains many promising studies concerning the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids for a wide number of chronic conditions (e.g., depression, renal disease, rheumatoid arthritis and asthma). Additional research is warranted to verify these preliminary suggestions.
- ⊙ **Glucosamine:** Glucosamine has been shown to have anti-inflammatory effects and is believed to repair and maintain cartilage. Recently the use of complementary and alternative therapies in the treatment of osteoarthritis has become more widespread, and particular interest has focused on glucosamine.
- ⊙ **Saw Palmetto:** Preliminary findings on the effectiveness of saw palmetto for alleviating the symptoms of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) indicate that use of the herb yields slight to moderate improvement in symptoms for men with this chronic urinary syndrome.

"Many studies over the years have demonstrated the positive effects of calcium and folic acid. This report reinforces those findings by demonstrating the cost savings that could be achieved by taking these two supplements," said Allen Dobson, Ph.D., senior vice president at The Lewin Group. "The results on omega-3 fatty acids, glucosamine and saw palmetto were also extremely encouraging in their ability to offset health problems and costs associated with chronic conditions."

Noting the implications of the study, the U.S. House Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness held a Congressional hearing on September 22 to review the results. Witnesses included:

- ⊙ Paul Coates, Director, Office of Dietary Supplements, National Institutes of Health
- ⊙ Al Dobson, Ph.D., Senior Vice President, The Lewin Group
- ⊙ Jeff Blumberg, Ph.D., Professor, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and Associate Director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University
- ⊙ Barbara Levine, Ph.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Nutrition in Medicine and Director of the Nutrition Information Center at Weill Medical College of Cornell University
- ⊙ Elliott Balbert, Chief Executive Officer, Natrol and President, DSEA
- ⊙ Marilu Henner, actress and author

"As our country faces an ever-growing crisis in health care, it is important to recognize the role that dietary supplements can play in reducing our burden of disease and the costs to manage it," said Jeffrey Blumberg, professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University.

"Many industry experts have long believed that dietary supplements provide consumers with long-term health benefits by reducing the incidence of debilitating health problems, and this study proves it," said Elliott Balbert, chief executive officer of Natrol and president of the Dietary Supplement Education Alliance. "The findings provide evidence to support both the cost savings and quality-of-life benefits of these particular supplements."

For more information about the study, visit www.supplementinfo.org.

The Lewin Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Quintiles Transnational, is a nationally recognized health care and human services consulting firm in Falls Church, Va. The firm specializes in helping public and private sector clients solve complex problems in healthcare and human services with policy analysis, research and consulting.

The Dietary Supplement Education Alliance is a coalition of industry leaders whose mission is to educate consumers, media and policymakers on the benefits of dietary supplements for optimizing health and prevention of disease, with a focus on their safety, efficacy and regulation. Its membership includes nutritional and dietary supplement suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and publishers.

For more information, or to speak with the spokespersons outlined above, please contact:

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Source: DaVanzo, J. et al, "Improving Public Health, Reducing Health Care Costs: An Evidence-Based Study of Five Dietary Supplements," September 22, 2004.