EP10

Omega 3 (2-3 g/day) Reduces the Pain of Osteoarthritis and Lumbar Disc Disease in CHF Patients

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Fish, especially oily fish such as mackerel, trout, salmon, herring and sardines, are the major food source of the long chain n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids Ecosapentanoic acid (EPA) and Docosahexanoic acid (DHA). There is a large body of evidence that EPA and DHA have useful cardiovascular effects including prevention and treatment of Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). Less well known is the profound effect of these agents in control of pain. In Rheumatoid Arthritis they cause a significant reduction in pain and swelling and allow the dose of NSAIDs to be reduced. Their use and safety in CHF for severe knee osteoarthritis or severe back pain due to disk disease has not been reported. We report on 10 patients with these conditions who had CHF (NYHA II-III) which was being maximally treated. None were on NSAIDs. They all had considerable pain despite 1-2 times daily paracetemol 500 mg, dipyrone 500 mg and Tramadol 100 mg. In addition 3 were on Fentanyl patches every 3 days. They were all given 3 capsules of omega 3 (each containing 950 mg of the combination of EPA and DHA) taken every morning before breakfast for 2 months. A Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) was used at every visit to assess the level of pain. The pain medication dosage was not changed.
Results: In 9 of the 10 patients there was a fall in the level of pain as judged by the VAS scale, the mean falling from 8.3 to 3.2 (with 10 being unbearable pain and 0 being no pain). In one there was no response. No side effects were seen and the heart rate, blood pressure, weight and NYHA were unchanged.
Conclusion: Omega 3 has a profound analgesic effect in CHF patients with severe resistant pain and appears safe in moderately high doses.