



Breaking News on Supplements & Nutrition - Europe

SPECIAL EDITION: INFLAMMATION

Academic excitement about inflammation falls on consumer deaf ears: Consultant

By Annie-Rose Harrison-Dunn+ , 24-Nov-2015

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There is only one approved health claim for inflammation in Europe and it is not being used because it means nothing to consumers, according to a health food consultant.

Peter Wennström, founder and president of the Healthy Marketing Team, told us there was currently a massive disconnect between what was interesting to the scientific community and what was interesting to consumers when it came to inflammation.

Research has been mounting around inflammation as a key mechanism in the modern 'unhealth' trends like obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Yet so far in Europe there is only one approved (13.1) health claim on the subject, confirming the link between vitamin D and normal function of immune system and inflammation response.

However a quick search of vitamin D supplements sold online shows immune system benefits are being pushed, but benefits for inflammation response are not.

"If you used that information, consumers would misunderstand it," Wennström said.

Meanwhile, the research community are all ears.

The University of Edinburgh and Medical Research Council's (MRC) Centre for Inflammation Research (CIR) listed over €7.4m in research grants for inflammation-related projects starting in 2014 alone.

"The professional stakeholders like the scientists and R&D managers are quite aware now that it's all about inflammation. It's a key that you should reduce inflammation.

"That understanding has been growing in the scientific and R&D community. But then that is very far away at the moment from how consumers understand things."

Education was the key to engaging consumers on the issue, Wennström said, and usually this involved explaining a 'concept'.

This was particularly complex with inflammation though since consumers were naturally drawn to simple health concepts and consequences rather than "abstract" mechanisms like inflammation that appeared to underline a whole host of health issues.

At this point the gap between what the science community and the general population understood by inflammation was so vast there would be no point in putting such a health claim on pack.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has rejected 14 other inflammation health claims for the likes of *Bifidobacterium* fortified cultured milk, echium oil, olive Biophenols and gamma – linolenic acid.

Inflammation is far from being fully understood by researchers though. A paper this year from the University of Cambridge, backed by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), looked at the impact of blocking the inflammation process in over one million participants.

Inflammation according to the CIR

Inflammation is in itself a protective response to infection and injury. However, if it is not managed correctly by the body it can cause illnesses like asthma and arthritis.

Long term or chronic inflammatory disorders are among the major killers in the UK, including heart disease, lung and airway disease associated with smoking, chronic liver disease associated with viral infection and alcohol and chronic

They found those who naturally had genes that 'dampened' inflammation - and therefore mimicked an anti-inflammatory drug - had a lower risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis but a 15% higher risk of developing coronary heart disease and having a heart attack.

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kidney disease.

Uncontrolled inflammation also leads to fibrosis - tissue scarring - which can prevent organs such as the lung, kidney and liver from working properly.

"Whilst this range of disorders may appear daunting, the fact that they may have a common cause means that by understanding the biology of inflammation, we will be able to design generic approaches to a range of disorders affecting different organs," says the CIR.