



## PRESS RELEASE

### NEW AUSTRALIAN TRIAL SHOWS FISH OIL MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN STIMULANT MEDICATION FOR CHILDREN WITH HYPERACTIVITY

Omega-3 fish oil can be more effective than the stimulant drugs that are commonly prescribed for children with ADHD according to the results of a trial from the University of South Australia in Adelaide<sup>1</sup>.

In the largest clinic-based study of its kind, 132 children aged 7-12 took a supplement called eye q™, a combination of omega-3 fish oil and omega-6 evening primrose oil for 15 or 30 weeks.

At the end of the 30 week trial almost half (40-50%) of the children taking eye q™ for the entire study saw significant reductions in their ADHD symptoms according to their parents who completed the assessment questionnaires.

For the first 15 weeks the authors divided the children into three groups. One group took eye q™, the second group took eye q™ and a low dose multi-vitamin/mineral supplement and the third group took placebo. After 15 weeks all the children went on eye q™ and the multivitamins/minerals.

Natalie Sinn, led the study.

“We asked parents to complete detailed questionnaires about their child’s behaviour at the start of the trial, the 15 week crossover and the end at 30 weeks. Around 30% of the children had shown strong positive treatment effects on the core ADHD symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity, compared to the placebo group after 15 weeks.”

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<sup>1</sup> Reference tbc

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“These effects were mirrored in the placebo group following their switch to active treatment, and the fish oil groups continued to improve after taking the supplement for a further 15 weeks. According to the data the multivitamin/mineral supplement had no additional effects.”

Prescriptions of the most popular stimulant drug, Ritalin, have increased from 2,000 in 1991 to 329,000 in 2005<sup>2</sup> and there are now concerns regarding the many side effects to the point where the House of Lords held a debate last month into its overuse.

Nick Giovannelli of the Hyperactive Children’s Support Group is against prescribing medication to children for ADHD and related conditions without at least exploring alternative therapies first.

“This new study adds to the mounting evidence that nutrition is safer and more effective than stimulant medication.” He said.

Dr Madeleine Portwood, Senior Educational Psychologist at Durham Local Education Authority has completed trials in the UK using eye q™ for children with learning and behavioural conditions of all ages<sup>3</sup>.

“This study shows once again that omega-3 can have a very beneficial effect for children with concentration and behaviour problems. We have seen from our trials in the Durham area that when these symptoms are addressed the children can access the good quality teaching provided by schools and see an improved academic performance.”

eye q™ is available in a range of forms including new eye q™ chews, a strawberry flavoured chewy capsule. The range is available from Dischem, Clicks, Retail Pharmacies and independent health stores

. Visit [www.equazen.com](http://www.equazen.com).

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in\\_article\\_id=375455&in\\_page\\_id=1770](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=375455&in_page_id=1770)

<sup>3</sup> [www.durhamtrial.org](http://www.durhamtrial.org)

### **Additional observations from the Adelaide Trial:-**

- The effect size of eye q™ compared to methylphenidate (Ritalin) is calculated using a comparison figure taken from a meta-analysis by Schachter et al<sup>4</sup>. They found the effect size of methylphenidate to be an average of 0.54 for the complete ADHD index. In the Adelaide Trial the effect size for eye q™ was 0.59 for the group that started on active treatment but 1.03 in the crossover group after they went from placebo on to eye q.
- The study found that the multivitamin and mineral supplement had no effect, the authors suggest the following.

“Contrary to hypotheses, there was no benefit derived from a multivitamin/mineral supplement above the PUFA (eye q™). Although they were set at recommended daily doses for children, it is possible that greater quantities were required.”

- Observation on drop out  
Although drop out levels for the Adelaide Trial were within the normal parameters it was noted by the authors that it was those with significantly higher scores on the Conners ADHD Index that were more likely to drop out. They suggest two probable explanations; firstly, parents are likely to have put the child on stimulant medication (an exclusion criterion) and secondly, the child was not compliant.
- According to the authors, prevalence rates of ADHD are estimated at 5-10% of the population in Europe, 3-7% in the USA and 11% in Australia.

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<sup>4</sup> Schachter HM, Bham B, King J, et al. (2001). How efficacious and safe is short-acting methylphenidate for the treatment of attention deficit disorder in children and adolescents? CMAJ 2001;165(11):1475-1488