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Vitamin D3 Supplementation Helps Women Build Muscle Even After Menopause

New study demonstrates vitamin effectiveness in reducing degeneration and risk of falls

CLEVELAND, Ohio (September 30, 2015)—The benefits of vitamin D supplementation for postmenopausal women have been widely debated. But a new study coming out of Sao Paulo, Brazil, now documents that vitamin D supplementation can significantly increase muscle strength and reduce the loss of body muscle mass in women as late as 12+ years after menopause. The results of the study will be presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) set in Las Vegas beginning on September 30.

Vitamin D deficiency is a common problem in postmenopausal women worldwide, creating muscle weakness and a greater tendency for falling. The double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted over a nine-month period. Muscle mass was estimated by total-body DXA (dual energy X-ray absorptiometry), as well as by handgrip strength and through a chair-rising test.

At the end of the trial, the women receiving the supplements demonstrated a significant increase (+25.3%) in muscle strength, while those receiving the placebo actually lost an average of 6.8% of muscle mass. Women not receiving Vitamin D supplements were also nearly two times as likely to fall.

"We concluded that the supplementation of Vitamin D alone provided significant protection against the occurrence of sarcopenia, which is a degenerative loss of skeletal muscle, says Dr. L.M. Cangussu, one of the lead authors of the study from the Botucatu Medical School at Sao Paulo State University.

"While this study is unlikely to decide the debate over Vitamin D, it provides further evidence to support the use of vitamin D supplements by postmenopausal women in an effort to reduce frailty and an increased risk of falling," says NAMS Executive Director Wulf H. Utian, MD, PhD, DSc(Med).

Drs. Cangussu and Utian are available for interviews in advance of the presentation at the annual meeting.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.