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CRN REACTS TO JAMA STUDY ON SAW PALMETTO

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 27, 2011—In response to the published study, “Effect of Increasing Doses of Saw Palmetto Extract on Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms¹,” published in *JAMA (the Journal of the American Medical Association)*, the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), the leading trade association representing the dietary supplement industry, issued the following statement:

Statement by Duffy MacKay, N.D., vice president, scientific and regulatory affairs, CRN:

“This is a well-designed, well-executed clinical trial but the results should not dissuade men experiencing urinary tract symptoms associated with an enlarged prostate gland (BPH) from considering saw palmetto as an option for reducing those symptoms.

In this study, both the placebo group and the treatment group saw improvements in their symptoms, creating some limitations for interpreting results. Although there is no clear explanation as to why the placebo group showed some improvement without intervention, it is possible that both groups may have included men whose urinary tract symptoms were not actually related to an enlarged prostate. Further, the trial might not have been large enough or long enough to have found a statistically significant benefit in the treatment group. With these potential limitations in mind, there are other practical things for men to consider about saw palmetto.

As a general rule, the potency of botanical dietary supplements is lower than pharmaceutical products. This helps account for the strong safety profile of dietary supplements, as reinforced by the lack of adverse effects in the study, making saw palmetto a safe choice. The lower potency of botanicals, however, results in less immediate and dramatic effects than one would expect with pharmaceutical interventions.

Although this trial didn’t provide results as compelling as we would like to have seen, there are other studies on saw palmetto that have shown benefit. General inflammation appears to contribute to the underlying cause of urinary tract symptoms related to an enlarged prostate. There are several nutrition and lifestyle modifications that can help to reduce the inflammation throughout the body. Saw palmetto extract in combination with other healthy habits, such as smart diet and regular exercise, is still a safe and viable option for men experiencing urinary discomfort associated with an ageing prostate.

As a naturopathic doctor, I’ve had some positive results in my own medical practice with this approach. If, after trying saw palmetto combined with lifestyle interventions, men don’t get adequate relief from urinary irritation and discomfort, they can seek additional interventions from their health care practitioner.”

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Note to Editor: The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), founded in 1973, is a Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing dietary supplement manufacturers and ingredient suppliers. In addition to complying with a host of federal and state regulations governing dietary supplements in the areas of manufacturing, marketing, quality control and safety, our 75+ manufacturer and supplier members also agree to adhere to additional voluntary guidelines as well as CRN’s Code of Ethics. Visit www.crnusa.org.

¹ JAMA, September 28, 2011—Vol 306, No. 12