Fish Oil Lowers Lipids in HIV

March 27, 2007

Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in fish oil can lower triglyceride levels in HIV-infected patients taking antiretroviral drugs, according to a report in the March 1st Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes.

Fish oils have been shown to reduce fasting and postprandial triglyceride levels in patients without HIV infection, the authors explain, but few data are available on their effects in HIV-infected patients.

Dr. Pierre De Truchis from Hopital Raymond Poincare, Garches, France and colleagues investigated the efficacy of Maxepa (a fish oil preparation rich in omega-3 fatty acids) in 122 HIV-infected patients with sustained hypertriglyceridemia after diet therapy alone.

Median triglyceride levels decreased by 25.5% in the fish oil group and increased by 1.0% in the placebo group, the authors report.

By the end of the double-blind period, triglyceride levels had returned to normal in 22.4% of the fish oil patients, compared with only 6.5% of the placebo patients.

Among patients who continued in an open period after the double-blind trial, the researchers note, triglyceride levels remained stable in those continuously taking fish oil and decreased significantly in those switching from placebo to fish oil.

Patients treated with fish oil had slight declines in total cholesterol levels, compared with slight increases in the placebo group.

The incidence of treatment-emergent adverse events did not differ significantly between the fish oil group and the placebo group, the report indicates.

CD4+ cell counts, CD8+ cell counts, and viral load measurements remained stable throughout the study, the investigators say.

“The place of polyunsaturated fatty acids in the armamentarium of treatment of metabolic disorders in HIV-infected patients needs to be further investigated with future prospective studies,” the authors conclude. “No general recommendations can be proposed, despite the positive results of the present study.”

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