

Website to educate about omega-3 goes live

9/30/2004 - Canada Ocean Nutrition has launched an education website to help fill what they see as a communication lack between industry and consumers about the health benefits of omega-3 fish oils.

ONC said they had created www.meg-3.com in recognition of the "need for a simple consumer friendly education website to help tie together growing consumer awareness of omega-3 with the health benefits of fish oil."

The company said it recently conducted consumer research with 200 women over the age of 30, who were responsible for the nutrition of their family and who were not dietary supplement users.

The results showed that there was high awareness of the term omega-3 with most respondents associating it with fish. However, the health benefits of omega-3 were poorly understood and the women therefore saw little reason to purchase products containing the oil.

"Most consumers found it hard to understand the technical aspects of the chemistry associated with the nutrients and this lack of understanding held back their intent to purchase," said ONC. *"When the health benefits of omega-3 were explained using consumer friendly language, the intent to purchase went from zero to 58 percent."*

Furthermore, the company added that when consumer education messages were tested in association with the MEG-3 brand – launched yesterday - intent to purchase rose to 87 percent.

"When the right messages are presented in a common sense manner people will learn the health benefits of omega-3 and understand the importance of regular daily consumption of EPA/DHA for their families," said Ian Lucas, vice president of marketing for ONC.

The FDA announced earlier this month that conventional foods containing EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids could now carry a qualified health claim stating that they may help to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), which causes 500 000 deaths annually in the US.

In 2000, the FDA announced a similar qualified health claim for dietary supplements containing omega-3 fatty acids.

The FDA recommends that consumers not exceed more than a total of 3 grams per day of EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids, with no more than 2 grams per day from a dietary supplement.

Scientific evidence is growing to substantiate the role of omega-3 fatty acids not only for protecting heart health but also prevention of cancer and other diseases.

The ingredient has moreover seen support from low-carb diets such as Atkins, which promotes omega-3 fatty acids as part of their eating plans.