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Evidence based complementary medicines

Despite the naysayers, when it comes to natural medicines and their ability to work in the human body to stave off illness and to foster health, the evidence is far reaching.

From the earliest records that validate natural medicines' initial use by the Greeks, Romans and other ancient tribes; to the modern research published in text books and medical journals; the use of plant and other natural extracts for medicine has been extensively studied over the course of thousands of years.

Despite well-proven traditional use authenticated by generations of natural medicine practitioners, the advent of clinical studies has increased the need for research to be newly validated for modern doctors and medical institutions.

The good news is that not only have natural medicine practitioners risen to the occasion of having their already well-studied herbs and nutrients vetted by new approaches developed for testing pharmaceutical medicines, but remedies have emerged from this research strong and competent in their ability to continue to improve the health of people the world over.

Take fish oil, for example. Recently, it has been determined that fish oil extracts are the most researched medicine ever. Not the most researched natural medicine or supplement, but THE most researched medicine EVER. Although a relatively modern medicine, fish oil as we know it carries supportive benefits due to their essential fatty acids (EFAs). These EFAs only found in marine fish (and plants), transfer their benefits to the human body when eaten as fish or taken in a therapeutic form as a fish oil supplement. The active compounds found in fish oil, eicosapentaenoic acid

(EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), have been studied for; their ability to improve the health of the heart and cardiovascular system, their function as a core reducer of inflammatory processes (by having an anti-inflammatory action), their joint health benefits, and their role in supporting healthy skin and eye tissue. Fish oil extracts are also rigorously tested for quality by independent assessors and the industry, as dictated by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration's stringent, world-leading standards.

Also, on the list of natural medicines supported by best practice research, is aged garlic extract. Garlic was one of the first plants mentioned in the Papyrus Ebers, the most important medical papyrus of ancient Egypt drafted way back in 1550BC. The research found on garlic reaches from its immune health benefits, to its suitability as a tonic for the health of the blood vessels and circulation. In ancient times, its use by the builders of the pyramids to increase their resistance

to infection was well documented. We now know the therapeutic quality of garlic comes from its action in assisting the development of healthy white blood cells during times of infection, as well as having a potent antimicrobial action (whereby it kills bacteria and fungi it comes into contact with both inside and outside of the human body). This quality is due to the antioxidants found in fresh garlic, some of which are amplified and improved when garlic is aged.

The modern extract known as aged garlic is further acknowledged by over 700 modern clinical studies as supporting immunity and also as an antioxidant for supporting healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels – especially when taken alongside standard medications for those with uncontrolled hypertension (high blood pressure levels). In the last few years, this has further been investigated by Australian researchers out of South Australia and Victoria who have demonstrated the effectiveness of Kyolic Aged Garlic extract for those with high, uncontrolled blood pressure.

Another extract known for its medicinal action and centuries of research comes from the root of the Indian spice plant turmeric. Research on turmeric extends across centuries with traditional evidence culminating in modern research being published across language and cultural boundaries, by Indian, Chinese and

English-speaking medical journals alike.

Used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine, turmeric root is indeed one of the most thoroughly researched plants we know; it has been the subject of over 5,500 clinical studies. It is known for its application in reducing pain associated with arthritis, and for its treatment of digestive conditions such as medically diagnosed irritable bowel disease. First used by traditional practitioners by crafting medicine made from the root itself alongside ghee and black pepper; modern turmeric extracts are manufactured using this early wisdom translated into extracts that provide beneficial extracts of this herb (and its active constituent curcumin) in an encapsulated form for ease of use.

It should also be noted that the Australian complementary medicines industry operates within one of the most tightly regulated systems in the world, where products are manufactured to a pharmaceutical standard under Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), and strict safety and quality regulations are enforced by the Department of Health's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), ensuring that responsible, evidence-based and high quality products are available to consumers. In fact, the Australian regulatory regime for complementary medicines is such that it is viewed by most countries as the consumer protection benchmark. 

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Evidence for vitamin

K2

Q&A with Dr Vik, Chief Medical Officer with NattoPharma ASA

Q: Is there research to support the use of vitamin K2?

To date there have been over 16 published human clinical studies on a specific form of vitamin K2 – MenaQ7®. For example, studies of healthy postmenopausal women showed that a 180mcg daily dose of MenaQ7® is beneficial to their bones and their heart. Research shows it improves bone mineral content, bone mineral density, and bone strength, as well as inhibiting age-related arterial stiffening and can actually improve vascular elasticity.

Q: So how does vitamin K2 work in the body?

Vitamin K2 activates proteins present in the body that help it to properly utilise calcium so it binds to the bone mineral matrix, helping to create strong bones. Simultaneously, K2 activates the matrix GLA protein (MGP), which inhibits calcium from depositing in arteries and blood vessels where it can cause harm. Protecting hearts and bones is the area of focus for vitamin K2 research.

Q: Who can benefit?

Everyone can benefit from vitamin K2, but clinical studies have shown that children stand to benefit the most, particularly as their bones are taking shape so intensely. A 2014 published study revealed that healthy children have the largest tissue-specific vitamin K deficiency. MenaQ7® is also an ideal supplement for women 40 years and older, providing protection for their heart and bones.

