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Vitamin D Decreases Pain in Women with Type 2 Diabetes and Depression
Loyola research demonstrates additional health benefits of supplement

MAYWOOD, Ill. – Vitamin D decreases pain in women with type 2 diabetes and depression, according to a study conducted at Loyola University Chicago. These findings were presented at a research conference at Loyola’s Health Sciences campus earlier this month.

Type 2 diabetes is associated with both depression and pain, but few studies have looked at how pain may affect the treatment of depression in patients with type 2 diabetes and no studies have evaluated the role of vitamin D₂ supplementation on this association.

Researchers in this study examined the efficacy of weekly vitamin D₂ supplementation (50,000 IUs) for 6 months on depression in women with type 2 diabetes. Two subscales were used to measure pain severity including sensory pain (numbness/tingling in the hands/fingers/legs) and neuropathic pain (shooting/burning pain in legs/feet).

Sixty-one percent of patients report neuropathic pain and 74 percent reported sensory pain at the beginning of the study. Researchers found a significant decrease in neuropathic and sensory pain at 3 and 6 months following vitamin D₂ supplementation.

“Pain is a common and often serious problem for women with type 2 diabetes and depression,” said Todd Doyle, PhD, lead author and fellow, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences, Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine (SSOM). “While further research is needed, vitamin D₂ supplementation is a promising treatment for both pain and depression in type 2 diabetes.”

Loyola researchers have received funding from the National Institutes of Health to examine changes in neuropathic and sensory pain following vitamin D₂ supplementation.

"Vitamin D has widespread benefits for our health and certain chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes," said Sue Penckofer, PhD, RN, study co-author and professor, Loyola University Chicago, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing. "This NIH grant will allow us to shed greater light on the role this nutrient plays in managing pain."

Other study authors included Patricia Mumby, PhD, professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences, Mary Anne Emanuele, MD, professor, Division of Endocrinology & Metabolism, SSOM; Mary Alice Byrn, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Nursing, St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.; and Diane E. Wallis, MD, Midwest Heart Specialists, Downers Grove, Ill.

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