

Jury out on 'Glucosamine'

-Talk to Your Bone and Joint Specialist

Australian
Rheumatology
Association
Victorian Branch



For Immediate Release – March 2004 Senior Citizens week

According to the 2002 National Health Survey, the prevalence of arthritis increases with age from one in three of those aged 55-64 to just over half (52%) of those aged 72 years or over. So arthritis and other forms of bone and joint disease are a hot topic for Senior Citizen's Week this year.

Management of musculoskeletal disease such as osteoarthritis of the knee involves many approaches including exercise, diet and the use of prescription and non-prescription drugs. The non-prescription drug **glucosamine** has received particular attention over recent years and has been a topic of debate and study for *bone and joint specialists*, (rheumatologist) throughout the world.

Glucosamine is a normal component of human cartilage and, taken orally as a natural supplement, it is believed to relieve symptoms and help replenish deteriorating cartilage. Clinical studies have reported conflicting results in terms of these proposed benefits.

Glucosamine does however have clear benefits in terms of reduced side effects. Research shows it to be safer than the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs which are commonly used to treat arthritis and which can pose a particular problem in the elderly.

So, what do the specialists recommend? The conclusion from a debate on the use of glucosamine held at the Centre of Rheumatology, University College Hospitals in London found that, "...**Oral glucosamine is a relatively safe but costly treatment for which there is evidence of a mild beneficial effect in patients suffering mild symptoms of osteoarthritis of the knee.**" Following this debate participants votes were equally divided - therefore no formal policy on glucosamine therapy has been adopted by the group.

Here in Australia, Associate Professor Geoff McColl, Honorary Secretary of the Australian Rheumatology Association says, "**Glucosamine has demonstrated a benefit to patients with knee osteoarthritis and has the advantage of having few side effects.**"

Consumers with questions about management of their musculoskeletal conditions, including the pros and cons of taking glucosamine should speak to their bone and joint specialist (rheumatologist).

Additional activities consumers may wish to investigate during Senior Citizens' week includes: the Victorian Seniors Walking Festival (14th –21st March) and arthritis self-management courses offered through Arthritis Victoria (www.arthritisvic.org.au).

Further information about bone and joint specialists can be found at www.rheumatology.org.au

If you would like to arrange an interview with a bone and joint specialists or additional information please contact Robyn Middleton on 02 9256 5458.



