

Supplement found to improve quality of life for female cancer survivors

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A natural nutritional supplement, marketed for the last decade as a sexual aid, has been shown to significantly improve overall quality of life for female cancer survivors, according to researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

The findings will be presented today at the 2011 [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#) (ASCO) annual meeting in Chicago.

Interested in quality of life issues for female cancer survivors, Kathryn M. Greven, M.D., a radiation oncologist at Wake Forest Baptist, first learned of the supplement, called ArginMax for Women™, from a small study conducted at Stanford University that found that it improved sexual function. Sexual dysfunction is prevalent in female cancer survivors, so Greven set out to see if the supplement could produce the same benefit in this population. She found that, while taking the supplement did not result in any improvement in sexual function for female cancer survivors, the supplement did improve their overall quality of life.

With funding from the National Cancer Institute, researchers at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Wake Forest Baptist, the Derrick L. Davis Forsyth Regional Cancer Center, and multiple other cancer centers across the country recruited 186 female cancer survivors to participate in the study.

To be considered, adult female volunteers had to be at least six months

beyond their last active treatment for any kind of cancer, with no current evidence of cancer. Adhering to standard double-blind, placebo-controlled protocol, neither the participants nor the investigators knew who was receiving the supplement and who was receiving a placebo.

The Daily Wellness Company, based in Honolulu, Hawaii, provided materials for the study, including ArginMax™ and placebo pills. Participants received three capsules of either ArginMax™ or placebo twice a day for 12 weeks and were asked to complete two standardized questionnaires that accurately measure sexual function and quality of life. The questionnaires were completed at the start of the study, at four weeks, eight weeks and 12 weeks.

The Female Sexual Function Index is a questionnaire that measures different aspects of sexual function, such as desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction and pain.

The FACT-G questionnaire measures overall quality of life and has been used in research of all cancer types. It evaluates physical, emotional, social and functional well-being.

ArginMax™ was originally designed as a sexual enhancement aid, so researchers were primarily looking for improvements in [sexual function](#) in this new population. They found no benefit in this area.

However, the study findings did reveal an across-the-board boost in measures of overall quality of life for the patients who were randomized to take ArginMax™. The FACT-G questionnaires showed improvements in both physical and functional well being among the participants taking the supplement.

"The group taking the supplements experienced significant improvement in overall quality of life, particularly physical well-being," said Greven,

the lead investigator on the study. "Bothersome symptoms such as lack of energy, pain, nausea, and sleeplessness were all improved, as were measures of functional well-being, for example the ability to perform normal activities at home or work. Simply, they reported a greater enjoyment of life, without any additional side effects from the supplement."

Edward G. Shaw, M.D., M.A., an oncologist as well as counselor, is principal investigator for Wake Forest Baptist's Community Clinical Oncology Program Research Base and a co-researcher on the study. He explained that cancer survivors can suffer from persistent inflammation, also known as chronic oxidative stress, that can continue for years following treatment of cancer causing fatigue that affects quality of life. He hypothesized that the ingredients in ArginMax for Women™ may be helping to counteract this process.

ArginMax™ is made from a patented formula containing a proprietary blend of L-arginine, ginseng, ginkgo, and 14 vitamins and minerals noted for boosting energy and circulation and optimizing hormonal balance. A separate Men's formula also is available.

"Beyond managing individual symptoms as they appear, the medical community has not been able to offer cancer patients more global symptom relief," he said. "This research is empowering for the community of cancer survivors. There's been some thought that dietary supplements could offer a potential benefit, but previous studies on other drugs and supplements have had disappointing outcomes. We'd like to see the results replicated in other studies, as they give us renewed hope in this area."

Greven said the findings have sparked interest among researchers about whether the supplement could improve quality of life and energy levels for other populations, as well. Future studies are being planned.

"It is very exciting that we've found something that has the potential to affect and improve quality of life for female [cancer survivors](#)," Greven said. "We still need to do further work to find an approach that will improve female sexual dysfunction."

Provided by Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center

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