Fish oil supplements have little effect on irregular heartbeat

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High doses of fish oil supplements, rich in omega-3 fatty acids, do not reduce atrial fibrillation, a common type of irregular heartbeat in which the heart can beat as fast as 150 beats a minute. The results of the AFFORD trial led by the Montreal Heart Institute were published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* on October 7th.

For the trial, 337 patients with atrial fibrillation not receiving conventional antiarrhythmic therapy were randomly assigned to 4 grams of fish oil a day or to placebo for up to 16 months. 64.1 % of patients who had received fish oil experienced a recurrence of atrial fibrillation compared to 63.2 % of those taking placebo. Furthermore, the study concluded that fish oil supplements did not reduce inflammation or oxidative stress markers, which may explain its lack of efficacy.

"Fish oil has no role in the rhythm-control management of atrial fibrillation," said lead investigator Dr. Anil Nigam, Cardiologist at the Montreal Heart Institute and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Montreal. "What is well-known and should be recommended to prevent heart disease and reduce blood pressure is a Mediterranean-type diet rich in natural omega-3 fats and other nutrients, including fresh fruits and veggies, legumes, olive oil, while lowering intake of red meat, trans fats and saturated fats. We believe that such a strategy might also be beneficial for the treatment of atrial fibrillation although more studies are required."

Provided by Montreal Heart Institute

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