

UBC debunks usefulness of glucosamine in relieving arthritis pain

By Don Harrison
Health Reporter

An expensive osteoarthritis fighter used by thousands of Canadians has been shown to have no long-term benefit.

The popular food supplement glucosamine was found to be no better than a placebo in an Arthri-

tis Research Centre of Canada study led by University of B.C. rheumatologist Dr. Jolanda Cibere. Glucosamine is a shellfish derivative, with a "treatment" course costing as much as \$50 a month.

The study looked at 137 Canadians aged 44 to 88 who had been taking glucosamine for knee joint

pain for an average of two years. All had reported at least a moderate benefit with the supplement.

Subjects in the placebo group fared up 42 per cent compared with 45 per cent in the glucosamine group. As well, glucosamine users fared as quickly as placebo users.

"Glucosamine has been used for

many years and its effectiveness has been controversial all along," said Cibere. "Our study shows that even if the supplement was initially perceived by study participants

to be helpful, it has no benefit for [longer-term] maintenance and continued use is not effective to control flare-ups."

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Read Ed Whelan in Province

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