

Re: Saw Palmetto Warning

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From: Rich256 (nospam_at_xxx.com)

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That really is not a very good argument. DRE is only a limited test for prostate abnormalities. Medical groups I have seen indicate that it is helpful only if accompanied with a valid PSA test. They warn you to let your doctor know if you are taking Saw Palmetto so that he can take that into account.

"Gut-Buster" <D-D-D-DONT.stare@me.privates> wrote in message news:G6d0e.441\$ZV4.5040@nnrp1.ozemail.com.au...

>

> *This is rubbish. PSA tests have been known to be about as conclusive as a*

> *digital rectal exam for some time now. Your warning just means people*

> *getting some relief from Saw Palmetto will now be worried, unnecessarily.*

>

>

> "Ed" <ed@online.net> wrote in message news:uRK%d.3077\$QZ7.1817@fe09.lga...

>> *Saw Palmetto Warning : Problems with Detecting Prostate Cancer?*

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> > The purpose of this letter is to alert physicians and the general public
> > to

> > the potential implications regarding the detection and treatment of
> > prostate

> > cancer involved with the use of an alternative supplement sold in health
> > food stores called saw palmetto. Prostate cancer is the most commonly
> > diagnosed cancer in American men. In 1996, an estimated 317,100 new
cases

> > of

> > prostate cancer, and 41,400 deaths from prostate cancer will be found,

> > among

> > men in the United States. It is the second most common cause of death in
> > men

> > older than 55. Early detection is the most important factor for cure! We
> > are

> > detecting prostate cancer within the past decade with increasing

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> > frequency,
> > and many patients with this condition are receiving such treatments as
> > radical prostatectomy and radiation therapy for cure.
> >
> > Although refinements in PSA-based testing have contributed substantially
> > to
> > the increased detection rate of prostate cancer, the incidence of
disease
> > was increasing dramatically even before the detection of PSA was
possible.
> > Self medication for prostate disorders has increased throughout the US
and
> > the rest of the world. Saw palmetto in particular raises concerns for
> > urologists regarding their ability to diagnose and treat prostate
cancer.
> > I
> > have seen many patients who have placed themselves on this herb. Its use
> > is
> > advised in advertisements and other marketing for treatment and
prevention
> > of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), prostatitis, and "urinary
> > difficulty"
> > in men.
> >
> > The extract comes from the berries of the palm tree saw palmetto
(Serenoa
> > Repens, Serenoa Serrulata), which is indigenous in the Atlantic
southeast
> > coast of North America from South Carolina to Florida and native to the
> > West
> > Indies. The plant grows six to 10 feet tall, with a crown of large
> > spiny-leaves that form a circular, fan-shaped outline. The berries are
> > deep
> > red-brown or black and are oblong and about one inch long. The extract
> > from
> > these berries is cheap and easy to purchase. Word has been spread via
> > direct
> > marketing, as well as by advertisements in magazines and throughout the
> > Internet. Reports, mostly in the European literature, suggest that use
of
> > saw palmetto can decrease the size of the prostate and improve urinary
> > symptoms (dose dependent) after months of use.[1] No "well done"
> > long-term,
> > double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of saw palmetto have been done
to
> > date.[2] Although saw palmetto does not affect certain hormonal levels,
> > there is clinical evidence, however, to suggest that its mechanism of
> > action
> > is similar to that of the commonly prescribed prostate drug finasteride
> > (Proscar). For example, several animal studies[3, 4] suggest that saw
> > palmetto has a similar effect on competitively inhibiting the binding of
> > dihydrotestosterone (DHT) and blocking the conversion of testosterone to
> > DHT, via its inhibition of 5-alpha reductase.
> >
> > Saw palmetto's primary therapeutic action is to inhibit 5-alpha
reductase
> > in
> > forming DHT and to a lesser extent, 3-alpha reductase, and to block the
> > action of DHT to receptors on prostate cells via 3-ketosteroid
reductase.
> > Research has also shown an anti-inflammatory[5] and antiestrogenic[3,
6,7]

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> > effect of Serenoa Repens. Use of saw palmetto in >patients with BPH
> > results
> > in reduction in the size of the prostate.[5] With finasteride, however,
> > studies have shown that 6 to 12 months of >treatment with 5 mg of
> > finasteride daily can reduce prostate volume, DHT, and prostate-specific
> > antigen (PSA) levels by 50 percent.[8] Therefore, any patient placed on
> > finasteride must have a baseline PSA and digital rectal examination.The
> > mechanism of action mimics the pharmacologic action of finasteride,
which
> > has recently been documented to be of little physiologic value compared
> > with
> > a placebo or alpha blockers.[9] The purified extract of saw palmetto
> > contains 85% to 95% fatty acids and sterols. Unfortunately, there are
many
> > forms of this extract on the market, containing additives and many
> > combinations of other herbs, vitamins, and minerals. Consequently the
> > consumer does not know exactly what he is purchasing. Saw palmetto has
> > been
> > used in Europe for more than 20 years. Research there, however, has
> > included
> > clinical studies showing its clinical urologic effects versus a placebo.
> > [10] Only one study measured the PSA levels prematurely after 3months
"the
> > treatment did not significantly alter PSA concentrations in these
> > patients." [13] However 5-alpha reductase inhibitors will reduce the PSA
> > levels by average of 50% after 6-12 months of use, invalidating this
study
> > on PSA. Consequently of most significance is the lack of well planned
> > "long
> > term clinical studies" concerning the effects of saw palmetto on
"lowering
> > the PSA" levels after 6-12 months! Any interference with PSA makes this
> > test
> > useless as a diagnostic tool for prostate cancer.
> >
> > The use of saw palmetto is not regulated by the FDA (its use falls under
> > the
> > guidelines for food supplements). In my own clinical practice, I have
seen
> > many patients on saw palmetto who were embarrassed to bring this to my
> > attention. I have also noticed a dramatic drop in PSA levels when
patients
> > have been on this herb for many months, making my clinical diagnostic
> > determination of prostate cancer more complex. Any 5-alpha reductase
> > inhibitor--whether saw palmetto or finasteride--will reduce PSA
> > significantly. I quote Dr. Julian Whitaker in his book, Prostate
> > Report-Prevention and Healing[11]: "When one of my patients has an
> > elevated
> > PSA, I don't rush him off for a biopsy. Instead, I encourage him to go
on
> > a
> > low-fat diet, and I prescribe a daily course of serenoa repens extract,
> > 360
> > mg a day, along with zinc and a regimen of antioxidant vitamins and
> > minerals. We then recheck his PSA level periodically, and it has been my
> > clinical experience that, in many cases, the PSA gradually falls." This
is
> > an example of how an underlying condition, possibly prostate cancer, can
> > potentially be concealed by losing the sensitivity of the PSA diagnostic
> > test. Although refinements in PSA-based testing have contributed
> > substantially to the increased detection of early prostate cancer, the
> > incidence of the disease is increasing dramatically although the

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detection

> > by PSA-incidence is alling since 1992. [12] Possibly the confusion in
the
> > literature about when to and who to treat prostate cancer has
contributed
> > to
> > this decline. So has the introduction of medical therapy with 5-alpha
> > reductase inhibitors and herbs introduced during the same time period.
The
> > most disturbing aspects of self-treatment with such herbal remedies are
> > their potential effects in masking PSA, which has revolutionized our
> > ability
> > to pick up prostate cancer. If one curtails the ability to detect
prostate
> > cancer by PSA, many cancers will progress undetected until it is too
late,
> > resulting in Stage D Disease.
> >
> > As a clinical urologist, I feel that the public deserves and has the
right
> > to know these possible consequences--further research is needed. I am
not
> > saying that saw palmetto or finasteride should never be used, but only
> > that
> > they should be used with careful medical supervision and after obtaining
a
> > baseline PSA and digital rectal exam. Although saw palmetto is an herb,
we
> > must treat it as a medicine. Since saw Palmetto can act as a 5-alpha
> > reductase inhibitor, thereby potentially interfering with PSA levels in
> > men
> > and decrease prostate cancer detection, it is imperative that men get a
> > baseline PSA level (as is recommended by the FDA for Finasteride, but
not
> > for the unregulated use of Saw Palmetto). Men self -medicating
themselves
> > with this herb are not aware of this detrimental effect. We are in a new
> > world where patients are more inclined to self-treat their medical
> > conditions with alternative means. I believe that there is some merit to
> > this, with proper guidance by qualified individuals. The escalating cost
> > of
> > medicines in the US has provoked Americans to seek more cost-effective
> > approaches, which is one of the many dilemmas that our present health
care
> > system has to address promptly. Doctors need to be better educated about
> > nutrition and alternative medicine. Physicians in the US are not
informed
> > about alternative botanical medicine; we are far behind the European
> > community in this regard. I believe that there are many benefits to
> > botanical treatments for many ailments when combined with nutritional
> > approaches. We must discover the alternative approaches that are
> > accessible
> > to us, while simultaneously using these remedies when appropriate and
> > combining them with conventional medical treatment. We must start to
> > incorporate this into our medical schools and residency programs so that
> > we
> > maintain the doctor-patient relationship. To render a proper diagnostic
> > evaluation, doctors and patients must communicate with each other, which
> > means that patients should inform their doctors about their use of any
> > over-the-counter vitamins, minerals, or herbs. A man who treats himself
> > may
> > have a fool for a patient!

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