
Symposium SA-1
Saturday, July 29, 2006

Dietary influences on anxiety and aggression

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Nutrition can have a significant impact on human behavior. A greater awareness of the link between nutrition and overall health has helped to fuel the explosive popularity of dietary supplements and botanicals. A myriad of purported health benefits are associated with these supplements, including claims surrounding anxiety and mood. For example, the recent recommendation by the Food and Drug Administration that American adults consume at least 25 grams of soy protein per day to improve cardiovascular health has generated an unprecedented demand for soy and soy-based foods. As the availability and variety of soy-based foods have increased, so have the health claims associated with soy consumption, including improvement in mood, making soy-based supplements one of the most popular herbal alternatives to pharmaceutical hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Similarly, there is growing evidence to suggest that omega-3 fatty acids are also beneficial for the heart. Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that about 60% of Americans are deficient in omega-3 fatty acids and omega-3 deficiencies have been tied to many conditions including violence, memory problems, hyperactivity and depression.

While the physiological effects of dietary phytoestrogens, omega-3 fatty acids, and other popular dietary supplements are undergoing intense scrutiny, relatively little is known about their neuroendocrine effects, or their effects on behavior, particularly mood and aggression. The purpose of this symposium is to critically examine the effects of soy phytestrogens, omega-3 fatty acids, DHEA and tryptophan on aggressive behavior in animals and humans, and consider the dietary recommendations and some of the health claims currently being made for many dietary supplements.

Four internationally recognized leaders in this field have agreed to participate and will be given 30 minutes each to present their data. The symposium will be organized and moderated by Dr. Heather Patisaul who will give a brief, 5 minute introduction and present each speaker. Time will be allowed for questions and discussion. If necessary, these times can be adjusted to fit with the conference schedule.