

Soya foods safe for breast cancer patients

As shown by recent epidemiologic studies

Glasgow, March 20th, 2014 – Recent studies show that consumption of soya foods after being diagnosed with breast cancer is perfectly safe. Dr. Mark Messina (Loma Linda University, US) confirms this finding during the 9th European Breast Cancer Congress (EBCC-9) in Glasgow.

In the past, there has been concern with regard to soya consumption by women diagnosed with breast cancer. The controversy centred on the role of soya's naturally occurring isoflavones (phyto-estrogens) and their potential oestrogen mimicking properties. The evidence is clear that isoflavones differ significantly from the human oestrogen hormone (17β oestradiol)². Isoflavones' bond with oestrogen receptors (ER) is much weaker. Isoflavones are Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators (SERMs) having a greater affinity for ER β than with ER α , while oestradiol binds to both receptors with equal affinity.

"Considering all scientific data there is no reason for doctors and health care professionals to discourage the use of soya food for breast cancer patients," says Dr. Messina (Loma Linda University, US).

The recommendations regarding a more plant-based healthy diet for cancer patients also apply to soya.

"Doctors may inform their breast cancer patients that soya is completely safe as part of a balanced diet," concluded Dr. Mark Messina.

An analysis of three epidemiological studies (2 in the US and 1 in China), published in 2012, confirms these views.

Notes on the studies

A total of 9,514 breast cancer patients were followed for an average of 7.4 years. Approximately half of the women were of Asian origin and half Caucasian. Women were divided in three groups according to soya intake (low, moderate, high). During the follow-up period, there were 881 deaths due to breast cancer and in 1,348 incidence of tumour recurrence.

Women consuming the largest amount of soya, had a non-significant reduction in breast cancer specific mortality of 17% and a significant risk reduction in recurrence of 25% as compared to the lowest soya consumers. Additionally, the analysis demonstrates that soya consumption does not impair the effect of tamoxifen, as the reduced risk in both tumour recurrence and mortality were seen in both tamoxifen and non-tamoxifen treated patients.

"This extensive analysis shows that consumption of soya by breast cancer patients has no harmful effect," says Dr. Mark Messina.

This finding was also confirmed by the American Institute for Cancer Research and the American Cancer Society: both organisations concluded that soya is safe for breast cancer patients, as published in a Cancer research update of the AICR: *"Soy is safe for breast cancer survivors."*⁴



References:

- 1) Official EBCC-9 sponsored Meet-the-Expert Breakfast session (March 20th, 7:00 am, Glasgow) (<http://www.ecco-org.eu/Events/EBCC9.aspx>)
- 2) Messina M, Caan BJ, Abrams DI et al. It's time for clinicians to reconsider their proscriptioin against the use of soyfoods by breast cancer patients. *Breast Cancer, Oncology Journal* – May 13, 2013 - <http://www.cancernetwork.com/breast-cancer/it%E2%80%99s-time-clinicians-reconsider-their-proscription-against-use-soyfoods-breast-cancer-patients>
- 3) Nechuta SJ, Caan BJ, Chen WY et al. Soy food intake after diagnosis of breast cancer and survival: an in-depth analysis of combined evidence from cohort studies of US and Chinese women. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2012;96:123-32
- 4) Soy is safe for breast cancer survivors. *AICR* - November 21, 2012 | Issue 109 (http://www.aicr.org/cancer-research-update/november_21_2012/cru-soy-safe.html)

About ENSA

Established in January 2003, the ENSA represents the interests of Natural Soyfoods Manufacturers in Europe. The term “natural” refers to the production process used by ENSA members to produce food using whole soybeans. Soy food products from ENSA members are produced without any use of GM (genetically modified) material or GM beans.

The ENSA is an association of 8 internationally operating companies, ranging from large corporations to small, family-owned businesses. Since its establishment in 2003, ENSA has been raising awareness for the role of soy and a plant-based diet in moving to more sustainable food production and consumption patterns.

For more information about ENSA, please visit www.ensa-eu.org or contact the ENSA Secretariat.

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