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Comvita trial provides evidence of Olive Leaf Extract benefits on cardiovascular health

Global natural health products company, Comvita (NZX:CVT) today announced the results of a randomized, placebo controlled clinical study demonstrating that intake of Comvita's Fresh-Picked Olive Leaf Extract (OLE) can positively affect blood pressure and cholesterol levels in pre-hypertensive individuals.

The results of the study are published in the European Journal of Nutrition (EJN) and demonstrated that taking Comvita Extra-Strength, Fresh-Picked Olive Leaf Extract for six weeks lowered blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels in study participants, relative to a placebo.

The clinical study involving 60 participants, was conducted in collaboration with the Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition at the University of Reading (UK) and the School of Food and Nutrition at Massey University in New Zealand. This six week study builds on the findings from a similar, recent study published in the British Journal of Nutrition by the same research group¹.

Professor Ian Rowland, co-author of the study and Head of the Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition, University of Reading (UK) said, "The results are promising and support a natural approach to helping manage cardiovascular risk factors and overall health."

"We think this is a significant finding. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the major cause of premature death worldwide, with clear evidence that reducing risk factors like elevated blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol can help prevent this disease."

"This research shows that regular use of a widely available supplement can have a measurable, positive impact on cardiovascular health," said Professor Rowland.

Comvita CEO Scott Coulter said: "Comvita welcomes these findings and we're pleased to see the body of evidence strengthening in relation to Fresh Olive Leaf Extract. We have an ongoing research programme, working closely with the University of Reading and other research institutions, to establish links between Olive Leaf Extract and its ability to support cardiovascular health. This study builds on research published in 2013, which demonstrated that supplementation with Olive Leaf Extract improved insulin secretion and efficiency in trial participants. The results from both the 2013 study and the current clinical trial suggest that Olive Leaf Extract supplementation may assist in the management of risk factors associated with chronic conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes and CVD²."

CVD is a class of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels and is the world's leading cause of death from chronic disease. The World Health Organization's (WHO) most recent Global Update (2014) attributes 17.5 million deaths annually to CVD, up from 12.3 million (25.8%) in 1990³.

Small improvements in risk factors can be significant and studies suggest that even a 2mmHg reduction in diastolic blood pressure is associated with a 6-7% reduction in CVD risk and a 10-15% reduction in stroke and heart attack^{4 5}. On this basis, the effect of the Olive Leaf Extract on blood pressure may be associated with a 9-14% reduction in cardiovascular risk, making it a useful addition to a healthy diet and lifestyle.

The study was a collaboration between the Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition, University of Reading (UK) and the School of Food and Nutrition at Massey University in New Zealand. Funding for the research was equally contributed to by Comvita and an R&D Project Grant from Callaghan Innovation, the New Zealand government's business innovation agency.

The study is titled: *'Impact of phenolic-rich olive leaf extract on blood pressure, plasma lipids and inflammatory markers– a randomized, controlled trial'*: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00394-016-1188-y>.

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Background information

About Comvita (www.comvita.com)

Comvita (NZX:CVT) is a global natural health company committed to the development of innovative products, backed by ongoing investment in scientific research. We are the world leaders in Manuka (*leptospermum*) honey and fresh-picked Olive Leaf Extract, which are at the core of the Comvita product range.

We have approximately 50% of honey supply under direct ownership or control, with the balance of supply from long term contractual and partnership arrangements. Comvita pioneered the development and use of medical grade Manuka honey and was the first to receive FDA approval (2007). We partner with US wound care company Derma Sciences, Inc. (NASDAQ:DSCI), the global licensee for Medihoney® specialist wound care products, which are used in hospitals and medical centres around the world. Comvita's freshly picked Olive Leaf Extract is grown, harvested, extracted and bottled at the world's largest specialised olive leaf grove, with over one million olive trees. Comvita sells into more than 18 countries through a network of our own branded retail locations, online (seven country specific e-commerce websites) and third-party outlets. We have over 500 staff located in New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, the UK and the USA.

About The European Journal of Nutrition

The European Journal of Nutrition publishes original papers, reviews, and short communications in the nutritional sciences. It has an impact factor of 3.467. The manuscripts submitted to the European Journal of Nutrition should have their major focus on the impact of nutrients and non-nutrients on immunology and inflammation; gene expression; metabolism; chronic diseases, or carcinogenesis. Or, a major focus on epidemiology, including intervention studies with healthy subjects and with patients; food safety, or biofunctionality of food and food components.

About Callaghan Innovation, NZ

Callaghan Innovation is an NZ Government agency supporting hi-tech business in New Zealand. They provide a single front door to the innovation system for businesses at all stages of their innovation journey – from start-ups to the most experienced R&D performers. They provide a range of R&D grants to add scale, depth and return to NZ businesses R&D investments.