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LETTERS

Vitamin C and zinc lozenges for COVID-19?

To the Editor:

We share Marwitz¹ concerns regarding widespread misinformation about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treatments. However, we do not agree with the statement that "Past examples of vitamin C and zinc, marketed for common cold symptoms, make extensive claims about treating and curing common colds, but the data do not fully support safety and efficacy of these agents."^{2–4} Ironically, these agents are being promoted as unsubstantiated treatments or preventives for COVID-19 today.^{2"}

In our Cochrane review, we found that regular vitamin C supplementation of at least 0.2 g/d shortened the duration of viral respiratory tract infections in adults by 7.7% ($P < 0.001$) and in children by 14.2% ($P < 0.001$).⁴ Our review supports the safety and efficacy of vitamin C.⁴ We did not demonstrate an effect when vitamin C was administered as a treatment, but low doses, short treatment, and late treatment may explain negative findings.⁴ Vitamin C may also have an effect on COVID-19,⁵ and a recent randomized trial observed that vitamin C increased the recovery rate of outpatients infected with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 by 70%.⁶

Marwitz¹ refers to a zinc review³; however, the review is flawed.⁷ There is strong evidence that appropriately composed zinc lozenges can shorten the duration of respiratory virus infections.^{8–11} Unfortunately, many of the zinc lozenges on the U.S. market contain either doses of zinc which are too low or substances that bind zinc ions so tightly that they are ineffective.¹¹

There is much misinformation about vitamin C and zinc in popular forums and also, unfortunately, in scientific forums^{4,6,7,12–15}; however, the positive findings from randomized trials should not be ignored.

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Re: Vitamin C and zinc lozenges for COVID-19?

To the Editor:

I appreciate the comments brought forward by Dr. Hemilä and Ms. Chalker regarding the efficacy of vitamin C and zinc

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