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Fish oil's cardiovascular health claims 'overstated'

From ANI

Washington, Mar 18: The purported benefits of fish for such things as cardiovascular health have been overstated and have put increased pressure on global fish stocks, according to a new research.

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Researchers at St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto teamed up with scientists at the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre and author Farley Mowat to closely examine the effects of health claims with regard to seafood.

For years, international agencies concerned with health and nutrition have promoted seafood consumption.

"Our concern is that fish stocks are under extreme pressure globally and that studies are still urgently required to define precisely who will benefit from fish oil," said Dr. David J. A. Jenkins, a doctor at St. Michael's Hospital and a professor at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine's Department of Nutritional Sciences.

"Further, if we decide that fish oil supplementation is necessary for good health, then unicellular sources of 'fish oil' like algae, yeasts, etc, should now be used, as they are in infant formula," Jenkins added.

While many studies show healthy benefits of consuming omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish oils, some other studies fail to show significant benefits.

However, these negative studies are often ignored and the result is that there is increasing demand for seafood by consumers in the developed world, often at the expense of food security in developing nations.

At best, fish oils are just one factor out of many that may reduce ailments such as heart disease and researchers found that people who do not eat fish, such as vegetarians, are not at increased risk of illness.

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UBC fisheries researcher Daniel Pauly said: "For many people in developing countries, fish is often their only source of protein. It would be irresponsible for us to 'triage' food sources without verifying that fish oil indeed promotes human health."

The research has been published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ).

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