

Bending the Perception on Joint Pain

By Allison Tannis, BSc., MSc.

Considered perhaps the most debilitating type of arthritis, osteoarthritis affects over 3 million Canadians, seriously reducing their quality of life. Sadly, there is nothing one can do to prevent it. This is not a disease you can catch. Osteoarthritis is thought of as the result of wear and tear on the joints. The result is pain, inflammation and, for some, the additional side effects of the commonly prescribed pharmaceuticals, called NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs).

With our aging population, more people will become afflicted by osteoarthritis, and respectively the demand for natural alternatives will grow. Luckily, research is finding new ways to treat joint pain. Recent research has found a new supplement that reduces the pain of osteoarthritis. And, it was found to be as effectively as the most commonly prescribed pharmaceutical, but without the side effects.

Researchers at the University of California–Irvine recently studied the effectiveness of SAME (S-adenosylmethionine) for pain associated with osteoarthritis of the knee. The study, entitled “Effectiveness of SAME for Pain Relief in Osteoarthritis of the Knee”, compared the therapeutic efficacy of the natural supplement SAME to the commonly prescribed NSAID, Celebrex, a COX-2 inhibitor.

SAME is a naturally occurring compound that can be found in all human tissues and organs. In the body, SAME is used in over 35 different biochemical reactions in the body and therefore, SAME is considered necessary for optimal health.

How does SAME work in the body? SAME is considered one of the most effective methyl donors. Its purpose is to attach a methyl group (a unit of organic chemical compounds) to other key elements in your body, such as DNA, to create more complex compounds. Your body uses these new compounds for numerous purposes.

This ground breaking study on SAME and osteoarthritis was a randomized, double-blind cross over trial with 61 participants. Before the study commenced, there was a one-week washout period which was done to clear any anti-inflammatory medicine from the participant’s systems. Then, participants were given 600 milligrams of SAME twice daily for eight weeks. This was followed by a one week wash out and then another 8 weeks, but with 100 milligrams of Celebrex twice daily.

Over the two-month testing period, SAME was found to be as effective in reducing pain as Celebrex. Celebrex was quicker at alleviating pain; however its effectiveness lessened with time. On the other hand, SAME did not reduce pain as quickly as Celebrex but continued to show pain reduction over the two-month treatment period. Mobility and the ability to function without pain improve equally with both SAME and Celebrex.

As millions of Canadians with osteoarthritis report that control of the pain and improved mobility is of greatest importance to them, its great that research suffer new perceptions on how to reduce joint pain. SAME appears to be a promising natural alternative to the treatment of osteoarthritis. Currently, there are plans for large scale studies to learn more about SAME and osteoarthritis.

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