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**VITAMIN EXPERTS CONDEMN HARVARD STUDY  
Doctors and scientists say study was flawed**

Today, the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH)—a nonprofit group of doctors, scientists, suppliers and consumers supporting the use of natural therapies—has released its critique of a major study that claims vitamins don't prevent cancer. The study by Dr Jennifer Lin and colleagues at the Harvard Medical School was published on January 7 in *The Journal of the National Cancer Institute*,

The ANH's evaluation concludes that the lack of effects demonstrated could have been predicted before the start of the 8-year study involving over 7,600 women with heart disease or high risk of it who averaged 60 years of age.

"This study was destined from the outset to obtain a negative result" said Dr Damien Downing, medical director of ANH, a practicing medical doctor who has practiced nutritional and environmental medicine for over 25 years. Dr Downing also criticised the journal editor for publishing the study "in the knowledge that the data do not support the conclusions."

Dr Robert Verkerk, scientific director of ANH, said: "Diet is the single biggest factor contributing to cancer, and there is a rapidly growing body of both research and clinical evidence to show that concentrated forms of nutrients including vitamins, minerals and botanicals are invaluable in cancer prevention."

ANH's critique shows that the study has no bearing on the effects of the three vitamins used, vitamins C and E and beta-carotene, on cancer prevention in healthy people. "Many of the risk factors associated with heart disease and cancer are shared, and nearly 80% of the women in the study were overweight or obese, therefore, likely to have been much more susceptible to cancer than a non-diseased, healthy population. Some may even have been presymptomatic", adds Dr Verkerk.

The ANH expert group argues that the dosages and forms selected for the study did not equate with those that would be most likely to yield a positive result. "Most people who are keen to prevent cancer don't just take these three vitamins", said Dr Verkerk, "they take a whole range of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients most of which have been independently verified to have powerful anti-cancer effects".

Dr Steve Hickey, another member of ANH's expert group, referred to the approach used by the Harvard team as "cookbook science". He said: "Certain researchers have hit on a cookbook recipe for performing studies, purporting to show that antioxidant vitamins are ineffective. In the most recent case, Jennifer Lin and colleagues make the erroneous claim that antioxidant vitamins do not prevent cancer".

Gretchen DuBeau, executive director of the ANH's US affiliate, added: "It's unfortunate that the media has compounded this misinformation by incorrectly reporting the erroneous results as applicable to the general population."

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## **EDITORS' NOTES**

### **Journal of the National Cancer Institute Study**

**Full scientific reference:** Jennifer Lin, Nancy R. Cook, Christine Albert, Elaine Zaharris, J. Michael Gaziano, Martin Van Denburgh, Julie E. Buring, and JoAnn E. Manson. Vitamins C and E and Beta Carotene Supplementation and Cancer Risk: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *J Natl Cancer Inst* 2009; 101: 14-23.

Abstract available at: <http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/djn438>

### **Alliance for Natural Health rebuttal**

ANH website feature on rebuttal: <http://www.anhcampaign.org/news/cancer-prevention-study-or-study-designed-to-prevent-vitamin-sales>

"Cookbook science" critique by Drs Steve Hickey and Robert Verkerk:  
[www.anhcampaign.org/files/090108\\_Cookbook-science\\_final\\_0.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/090108_Cookbook-science_final_0.pdf)

ANH's full rebuttal:  
[www.anhcampaign.org/files/090108\\_ANH\\_rebuttal\\_Lin\\_JNCI\\_final.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/090108_ANH_rebuttal_Lin_JNCI_final.pdf)

### **About the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH)** [www.anhcampaign.org](http://www.anhcampaign.org)

The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) is an international, non-governmental organisation, based in the UK. It was founded in 2002, and works on behalf of consumers, medical doctors, complementary health practitioners and health-product suppliers worldwide, to protect and promote natural healthcare, using the principles of good science and good law.

The ANH's overriding goal is to help develop appropriate legal and scientific frameworks for the development of sustainable approaches to healthcare. As in the fields of energy and agriculture, sustainable healthcare invariably requires use of natural products which are inherently compatible with human biochemistry and physiology. Within this setting, consumers and health professionals should be able to make informed choices about a wide range of health options, and in particular those that relate to diet, lifestyle, traditional medicinal and non-drug-based or natural therapies, so that they may experience their benefits to the full while avoiding unnecessary risks.

**About the American Association for Health Freedom (AAHF)**

[www.healthfreedom.net](http://www.healthfreedom.net)

The American Association for Health Freedom (AAHF) is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization that protects Americans' rights to access integrative medicine and dietary supplements. AAHF protects the right of the consumer to choose and the practitioner to practice by lobbying Congress and state legislature and crafting legislation; acting as a government watchdog and filing comments on proposed rulings; educating the public, press, and decision-makers on integrative medicine; initiating legal activities and joining and forming significant coalitions.