

New York Times Syndicate

Supplement May Energize Some Chronic-fatigue Patients

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WASHINGTON (NYT Syndicate) — **A DIETARY SUPPLEMENT MAY BENEFIT VICTIMS OF CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME**, researchers announced at a news conference here Tuesday. "We've demonstrated a real benefit with NADH in this study," said Dr. Joseph A. Bellanti of the Georgetown University School of Medicine, who led the study of chronic fatigue patients. NADH is a compound found naturally in food that plays a central role in the process by which cells convert food into energy.

A poorly understood ailment, CFS symptoms afflict some 500,000 people nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Doctors can only diagnose the disease by these symptoms, which include headaches, body aches, poor concentration, sore throats and lethargy lasting at least six months. Bellanti and his colleagues described the results of a three-month trial of NADH. Of 26 patients given the supplement, eight reported significant lessening of their symptoms, compared with only two of 26 control patients who were taking a placebo. Furthermore, 72 percent of patients in a follow-up study reported that their symptoms improved.

Bellanti and his colleagues theorize that CFS is nothing more than a lack of the chemical adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which provides power to the body. Chronic infections, stress, and other ailments tend to deplete the chemical, according to the researchers. NADH, short for nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide, is the chemical that jump-starts the production of ATP in muscles, so the researchers hypothesized that simply providing

supplements of the chemical might benefit people with chronic fatigue. Patients in the study received 10 milligrams of NADH a day. "They may have stumbled onto something useful," said Ronald Glazer, a virologist and immunologist at Ohio State University School of Medicine. He argued that so little is currently available to treat the syndrome that CFS patients should consider taking the supplement now.

"These people are really suffering," said Glazer, whose own work on the causes of the disease was published last year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Both Glazer and the study authors agreed that more clinical trials of NADH must be conducted to confirm the results of the study. One physician who regularly treats many patients with CFS, **Dr. Jacob E. Teitelbaum** of Annapolis, Md., said he already prescribes the supplement to his patients, along with a regimen of exercise, vitamins, antibiotics and sleep therapy.

Since NADH occurs naturally in foodstuffs, particularly in meats, the Food and Drug Administration regards it as a nutritional supplement and not a drug. Some patients in the study complained of overstimulation and loss of appetite in the first days of taking the pills. A person would have to take 700 of the pills used in the study to reach the maximum safe dose, according to one expert at the press conference. The study, published in the February *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, was funded by Birkmayer Pharmaceuticals, a company that manufactures NADH. According to the company, consumers typically pay one dollar per five milligram pill for the supplement.