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Debate over Omega-6s Confuses Consumers

Journal Articles Leave even some Seafood Scientists Scratching their Heads

July 8, 2008 Washington – A pair of articles focusing on the fats in fish from the July issue of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* is puzzling consumers and health professionals alike. Fish, particularly oily fish, at least twice per week is recommended as a front-line fighter against heart disease because it is high in protein, low in total fat, and one of the only naturally-rich sources of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids. But a controversial article claiming fish with lower amounts of omega-3s than omega-6s may be harmful to heart health flies in the face of this recommendation.

The article suggests hamburger and bacon might have more heart-healthy properties than tilapia based solely on their lower omega-6 content.

“There is an on-going discussion about these fatty acids, but it’s a dangerous reach to even suggest that replacing a meal of low-fat tilapia with ground beef or bacon would be a healthy choice,” said Jennifer Wilmes a registered dietitian with the National Fisheries Institute.

There is currently no scientific consensus that lower-omega-3, higher-omega-6 fish are unhealthy. William Harris, PhD devotes a three page research editorial in the same July edition to challenging the theory, pointing out that it “fails to consider relevant human experimental evidence” and attacks the dramatic comparison of tilapia to hamburger and bacon, calling it a “potentially flawed concept” that overstates the impact of omega-6.

“We need more science to agree on the impact of an omega-3 to omega-6 ratio,” said Wilmes. “But what we do have scientific consensus on is that omega-3s – which you can get plenty of by eating a variety of fish – are paramount to heart disease prevention.”

For more than 60 years, the National Fisheries Institute (NFI) and its members have provided American families with the variety of sustainable seafood essential to a healthy diet. For more information visit: www.AboutSeafood.com.

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