

## A Very Short Editorial

There you are, you've just finished reading the New England Journal of Medicine and you have a blinding headache. Perhaps it is low light level and eyestrain. More likely, it's just the usual journal content causing the headache. Since it is an allopathic journal, you decide to take an allopathic approach to the headache. You reach for the ibuprofen, stomach be damned. The quandary is what dose to take. You have a moderate-to-severe headache, so perhaps the old prescription level of 800 milligrams (Motrin style) will do the job. Certainly you are intelligent enough to use the right dose for the right level of pain.

There it is, the cause of the headache: the Saw Palmetto study in Volume 354, Number 6, the February 9, 2006, issue of the aforementioned journal with all those syllables in its name. Following in the tradition of giving St. John's Wort to severely depressed patients at the same dosage proven to help mild-to-moderate depression, and expecting complete remission of symptoms, Bent et al gave a previously studied dosage of Saw Palmetto extract (320 mg daily) to patients with benign prostatic hyperplasia. Except for the fact that the previously studied dosage had been shown to help patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms, not the moderate-to-severe patients in Bent's study, the study was well done. One cannot argue strongly against the conclusion that at this dosage, and in a patient population with this level of BPH, Saw Palmetto was no more effective than placebo.

In some of the press coverage of the article, the author was able to make this point and indeed speculated that higher dosages should be investigated in further studies. However, the real damage had already been done: most of the press coverage took the usual tact of throwing out the baby any time it's the offspring of non-pharmaceutical parents.

For instance:

"Saw Palmetto Wilts As Benign Prostate Hyperplasia Treatment" – CNN

"Herb Not Effective For Enlarged Prostate" – ABC News

"Saw Palmetto Ineffective For Treating Enlarged Prostate" – mayoclinic.com

"Saw Palmetto Won't Ease Enlarged Prostate" – Forbes

I can just feel that ibuprofen kicking in.

Al Czap  
Publisher