IBS

Soluble fiber benefits patients with IBS

New European data reveal that soluble fiber (psyllium) offers benefit to primary care patients with IBS.

Recommendations by primary care physicians to increase dietary fiber intake in patients with IBS by ingesting soluble fiber or insoluble fiber (bran) are commonplace, despite limited evidence for the efficacy of such an approach, and some evidence that bran worsens symptoms.

Bijkerk and colleagues report on the efficacy of psyllium or bran treatment for IBS in the primary care setting. A total of 275 individuals with IBS were randomly allocated to 12 weeks of daily treatment with psyllium (10 g, $n = 85$), bran (10 g, $n = 97$) or placebo (rice flour 10 g, $n = 93$). Response to treatment, defined as adequate symptom relief for 2 weeks in the previous month, was assessed after 1, 2 and 3 months. A significantly greater proportion of patients in the psyllium group achieved a treatment response

after 1 month and 2 months of therapy, compared with the placebo group. Bran was more effective than placebo only during month 3 of treatment. Symptom severity was reduced by a significantly greater degree in patients taking psyllium compared with bran or placebo. Discontinuation of treatment was most frequent in the bran group; worsening of symptoms was the most frequently cited reason for withdrawal. Quality of life was unaffected in all three groups.

The authors conclude that "...the results of this large scale trial in primary care support the addition of psyllium, but not bran as an effective first treatment approach [for IBS]."

Rachel Jones

Original article Bijkerk, C. J. *et al.* Soluble or insoluble fibre in inflammatory bowel syndrome in primary care? Randomised placebo controlled trial. *BMJ* doi.10.1136/bmj.3154

Credit: Wikipedia