



Irish Omega-3 Study

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Investigating the potential of Omega-3 in the prevention of psychosis

Clinician Information Leaflet

Study Aim

To investigate whether Omega-3 fatty acid food supplements can reduce the risk of transition to psychosis in high risk individuals.

Why?

While studies of Omega-3 fatty acids in the treatment of established schizophrenia have shown limited efficacy, there is evidence that Omega-3 fatty acids are neuroprotectiveⁱ. A small randomised placebo controlled trial of Omega-3 fatty acids in Austria showed a significant decrease in the development of psychotic disorder in a high risk group compared with placebo, with no difference in adverse effectsⁱⁱ. However, the study was small and needs replication on a larger scale before we can draw useful conclusions.

How?

As part of the development of the National Clinical Programme for Early Intervention in Psychosis, we are offering individuals who may be at risk of developing psychosis the opportunity to take part in a randomised placebo controlled clinical trial – to assess the potential for Omega-3 to reduce the risk of developing psychosis. Subjects would, if anything, be likely to benefit from the follow-up that being in the trial would involve and they would not be exposed to any dangerous or long-term side effects. Those who received Omega-3 fatty acids would be likely to receive cardiovascular health benefits at the very least.

Who?

We would like to see anyone who you suspect could be at risk of psychosis, whether because of unusual experiences, unusual personality or recent deterioration in function. These indications can be extremely subtle.

Inclusion criteria

- Age 13 to 45 years.
- Unusual experiences/Unusual personality.
- OR Family history of a first degree relative with psychosis AND a significant deterioration in general function (occupational, educational, social, housework etc.).

Exclusion criteria

- Previous psychotic or manic episode of at least one week's duration.
- Acute suicidal or aggressive behaviour.
- Substance dependence.
- Previous treatment with an antipsychotic or mood stabiliser for a psychiatric indication for longer than two weeks in the previous three months.

Description of study

The study is a randomised placebo controlled clinical trial of Omega-3 (i.e. 1000mg of eicosapentaenoic acid and 1000mg docosahexaenoic acid) in the reduction of risk of transition to psychosis. All participants will receive 200ml juice drinks (one to be consumed daily for six months) with Omega-3 fatty acids added to the drink for the active group. Neither the active nor placebo drink tastes of fish. Blood tests (which are optional) will be conducted at the start of the study and at three months to assess blood levels of Omega-3. The study will be conducted over the course of a year. Subjects will be assessed on at least four occasions during the study period, but more often where there is a clinical indication.

How to refer

Please refer patients who may be “at risk” of psychosis to Dr. Maeve Rooney, Consultant Psychiatrist and Principal Investigator at:

Phone: 086 4520452
Email: Irishomega3study@ucc.ie

Outcome of referral

If the individual is suitable he/she will enter the study and will be seen by Early Intervention services or the appropriate mental health team. If the person is not suitable for the study we shall organise seamless referral to his/her appropriate mental health service, as required. We shall inform you of the outcome.

Further information

For more information about the Irish Omega-3 study or The Irish National Clinical Programme for Early Intervention in First Episode Psychosis please go to our website www.ucc/en/irishomega3study. Information sheets and referral guidelines are also available to download on this website.

Please contact us if you have any further questions about the Omega-3 study, the referral guidelines or about the National Clinical Programme for Early Intervention in Psychosis.

Damian O’Driscoll, Study Co-ordinator email: damianodriscoll@ucc.ie tel: 021 4901926
Dr. Maeve Rooney, Consultant Psychiatrist email: Irishomega3study@ucc.ie tel: 086 4520452

Irish Omega-3 Study
HRB Clinical Research Facility at UCC
Mercy University Hospital
Grenville Place
Cork, Ireland

ⁱ Joy CB, Mumby-Croft R, Joy LA. Polyunsaturated fatty acid supplementation for schizophrenia. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2006;3:CD001257

ⁱⁱ Amminger GP, Schafer MR, Papageorgiou K, Klier CM, Cotton SM, Harrigan SM, et al. Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids for indicated prevention of psychotic disorders: a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 2010;67(2):146-54