



January 24th, 2008

In response to the recent developments of the press release by UMCU clinical study on patients with acute pancreatitis the International Probiotics Association which is an organization composed of industry and academia would like to make some comments:

Even though all clinical study results are taken very seriously, the results must be interpreted with caution:

- a) As suggested by the authors in their press release the patients had a very severe form of pancreatitis classifying them as critically ill. The intended use of authors' study was to use the probiotic mixed strain as a drug to reduce the number of infectious complications suggested by the study (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=526218>). There is very little scientific evidence of probiotics used in reducing infectious complications in patients with a disease that historically has high mortality rates.
- b) The researchers were unable to explain the cause of death suggesting that there might be other factors that have contributed to the result. They stated that the probiotics didn't cause infection and the results were of secondary finding. Until the cause of death is determined, the potential contribution of probiotics cannot be determined. There might have been other factors that have caused death.
- c) The study in these critically ill patients fed through a tube, doesn't suggest any implications with the consumption of probiotic foods, supplements and beverages where the record of safety is exemplary especially when probiotics are used per manufacturers' recommendations in healthy and mildly ill people.

IPA takes all negative studies very seriously, but until the study is fully published and available for review one cannot jump to conclusions since it currently raises more questions than answers and it is inconsistent with the long record of safety and health benefits of probiotics. IPA and its members are committed to accurately informing the public and other interested entities about the safety of probiotics and delivering quality products into the market. Administration of probiotics in critically ill patients is an area in need of greater research and it should only be done after consultation with a licensed physician. Probiotics have a long history of safe use in the general population and can be an effective way to promote good digestive health.

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