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Contact: Thom Householder, Front Burner PR
(207) 653-6122, thom@frontburnerpr.com

New Studies Examining Positive Connections Between Diet Rich in Wild Blueberries and Better Brain Health

Naturally Abundant Compounds in Wild Blueberries Focus of Research

Portland, ME — What started 10 years ago with a few studies looking into the impact of blueberry consumption and Alzheimer's Disease has led to more research relating to Parkinson's Disease, cognitive performance in children, balance and hearing.

During this time, researchers have learned a tremendous amount about the powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties in blueberries. Now, they want to learn more and are launching new studies into the health benefits of the naturally occurring compounds found in blueberries – polyphenols, flavonoids and anthocyanins.

Previous studies have shown the potential for compounds in blueberries to impact memory and mood in older adults, as well as the function of compounds in blueberries to enable "housekeeper" cells in the brain to remove biochemical debris, which is believed to contribute to the decline of mental functioning with age.

Below are some of the many brain-related studies currently underway looking into how compounds in blueberries can help improve brain health and protect against other diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic illnesses.

Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's Disease is a degenerative disease that affects the area of the brain that controls movement, and researchers at Purdue University and North Carolina State University are looking for ways polyphenol compounds in Wild Blueberries may slow or help prevent Parkinson's Disease.

"Hundreds of thousands of people are impacted by Parkinson's Disease in the U.S. alone. The potential positive impact of discovering a link between compounds in Wild

Blueberries and Parkinson's is huge," noted Mary Ann Lila, Director of the Plants for Human Health Institute at North Carolina State and a leading researcher in this area. (http://plantsforhumanhealth.ncsu.edu/people/lila-mary-ann/)

Age-Related Memory Decline

Researchers at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, led by Robert Krikorian, are continuing studies investigating the effects of blueberry supplementation on age related memory decline, brain function and structure, and biological markers associated with neurodegeneration. These studies build on earlier Krikorian research (link below) studying whether Wild Blueberry supplemented diets improved memory function and mood in older adults with early memory decline.
(www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20047325)

Improved Cognitive Performance in Young Children

There has been a great deal of research focused on how compounds in Wild Blueberries impact adults. Now, new studies are looking at children and the link between blueberry-containing diets. Following consumption of a blueberry rich drink, children ages seven through nine showed interesting changes in cognitive performance including evidence of improvements in recall and certain aspects of attention**.** Researchers at the University of Reading in England will publish their results later in 2013.
(www.reading.ac.uk/pcls/people/claire-williams.aspx)

Hearing

Most people do not often connect hearing loss with brain function, but in fact, significant hearing impairment is related to the way the brain processes signals. Because of this brain connection and what researchers already know about the potential of compounds in Wild Blueberries to improve brain health, researchers are studying the effects of frozen Wild Blueberries on hearing and cognition in older adults.
(www.blueberrystudy.com)

Balance and Cognition

As people age, their ability to balance can deteriorate. Scientists at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston are currently exploring how blueberries impact balance, gait and cognition in older subjects.

"Balance is critical to many mobile functions," said Barbara Shukitt-Hale, one of the leaders of the study at Tufts. "Diminished ability to balance can cause difficulty walking, increase falls and result in an inability to carry out many daily tasks that are critical for independent living."

The Wild Blueberry

According to research, Wild Blueberries contain higher concentrations of compounds than most other berries, making them an excellent choice for people looking to improve health through diet. This same research also states that it is never too early or too late to benefit from the compounds in Wild Blueberries. It is simple and easy to make Wild

Blueberries part of a healthy diet because they are frozen at the peak of antioxidant freshness to lock in their nutritive value and available year round in the frozen fruit case of grocery stores.

“It’s best if you can get a daily dose of Wild Blueberries but if not individuals should aim for enjoying them a minimum of 3-4 times a week for maximum nutritional benefits,” said Susan Davis, MS, RD, nutrition advisor to the Wild Blueberry Association of North America. “Try frozen Wild Blueberries in smoothies, a handful on oatmeal or yogurt or sprinkled on an open-face peanut butter sandwich for a great way to get the protective nutrition all bodies need for good health.”

About the Wild Blueberry Association of North America (www.wildblueberries.com)
The Wild Blueberry Association of North America is a trade association of growers and processors of Wild Blueberries from Maine and Canada, dedicated to bringing the Wild Blueberry health story and unique Wild Advantages to consumers and the trade worldwide.

For news, recipes, and related health information about Wild Blueberries, visit www.wildblueberries.com, www.wildblueberryhealthblog.com, and follow www.facebook.com/wildblueberries and www.twitter.com/WildBBerries4U.