

LETTER

Curcumin and Alzheimer Disease: This Marriage Is Not to Be Performed

The therapeutic use of curcumin in the treatment of Alzheimer disease (AD) proposed by Zhang *et al.* (1) was contradicted by clinical evidence. In a randomized clinical trial, curcumin (1–4 g/day for 6 months) failed to improve cognitive performance in mild-to-moderate AD patients and did not have any beneficial effect on pro-inflammatory biomarkers such as serum amyloid- β peptide and isoprostanes (2). This lack of effect could be attributable to the low bioavailability of oral curcumin. The oral administration of 450–3600 mg of curcumin/day for 1 week to patients affected by colorectal cancer produced a plasma concentration of ~ 3 nM (3). However, plasma levels up to 160 nM were obtained in healthy volunteers exposed to oral curcumin at supra-therapeutic doses (10–12 g/day) (4). These low plasma concentrations did not depend on the acute regimen of treatment. Indeed, chronic administration of curcumin (1–4 g/day for 6 months *per os*) initiated plasma concentrations in the range 60–270 nM (2). Considering the presence of the blood-brain barrier, it is plausible to conclude that brain curcumin con-

centration in humans could be even lower than that found in plasma. Therefore, the inhibition of amyloid precursor protein maturation by 1–20 μ M curcumin found by Zhang *et al.* (1) in human and rat cells is unlikely to occur in AD subjects. Finally, curcumin is not safe since it initiates several toxic effects including diarrhea, iron-deficient anemia, potential harmful interactions with drug-metabolizing enzymes, and DNA damage, which could be even more severe in elderly individuals such as those suffering from AD (5).

Cesare Mancuso¹, Raffaella Siciliano, and Eugenio Barone
Institute of Pharmacology, Catholic University School of Medicine, Largo Francesco Vito, 1–00168 Roma, Italy

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DOI 10.1074/jbc.L110.133520

¹E-mail: cmancuso@rm.unicatt.it

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J. Biol. Chem. 2011, 286:le3.
doi: 10.1074/jbc.L110.133520

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