



**NEW STUDY FINDS INCREASED MULTIVITAMIN USE  
BY THE ELDERLY COULD SAVE MEDICARE \$1.6 BILLION**

*Lewin Group Report First Ever to Quantify Preventative Health Benefits  
Of Multivitamin Supplementation Using Health Insurance Model*

WASHINGTON, Oct. 2, 2003 – The results of a new study released today show that the daily use of a multivitamin by older adults could lead to more than \$1.6 billion in Medicare savings over the next five years.<sup>i</sup> The study, funded by Wyeth Consumer Healthcare and conducted by The Lewin Group, was presented at "*Multivitamins and Public Health: Exploring the Evidence*," a meeting which brought together leading experts from government agencies, top research universities and health advocacy organizations to examine the current science supporting daily multivitamin use and help chart the course for future research.

The study, the first of its kind, included a systematic literature review of the most rigorous research available and examined the health effects of multivitamin use among adults over 65 years old. The researchers used an analysis of Medicare claims files and widely accepted Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost accounting methods to determine the costs and potential savings, monetizing the potential preventive health benefits of multivitamin supplementation.<sup>ii</sup>

"We were able to identify significant cost savings based on improved immune functioning and a reduction in the relative risk of coronary artery disease through providing a daily multivitamin to the 65 and over population," said Allen Dobson, Ph.D., senior vice president and director of Healthcare Finance at The Lewin Group. "In my experience, finding any cost savings for preventive measures is unusual and finding cost savings of this magnitude is very rare."

Over the five-year period from 2004-2008, the study results show potential savings from a reduction in hospitalizations for heart attacks, as well as from a reduction in hospitalizations, Medicare nursing home stays and home healthcare associated with infection.<sup>iii</sup>

While the evidence most strongly supports the beneficial effects of multivitamins in improved immune functioning and a reduction in the relative risk of heart disease, researchers also reviewed literature that examined the preventive benefits of multivitamin supplementation as it relates to colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis. These other conditions were not included in the cost estimation, however, because the research currently available in these areas did not support a direct translation from health effect to reduced health care utilization within a health insurance framework.<sup>iv</sup>

These disease states, along with a wide range of additional topics, were among the themes at the *Multivitamins and Public Health: Exploring the Evidence* meeting yesterday. The invited panel of multidisciplinary thought leaders reviewed the current state of the science and discussed the role multivitamins play in reducing the risk of developing chronic disease, as well as their role in immunity and public health. They came to the following conclusions:

- Most Americans do not get optimal amounts of key micronutrients through diet alone, despite the evidence that poor nutritional status increases the risk of birth defects, and infectious and chronic disease;
- Daily multivitamins should be recommended to help close this nutritional gap;
- Multivitamins are safe, affordable, cost-effective and accessible;
- There is promising evidence supporting multivitamin use for the prevention of some chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, making it prudent to recommend that all adults take a daily multivitamin.

"Despite our efforts to maintain a healthy diet, research indicates most of us fall short of getting the vitamins and minerals we need," said David Heber, M.D., Ph.D., director of the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition and a co-chair of *Multivitamins and Public Health*. "A daily multivitamin is a simple and cost-effective way to help ensure good health."

"The current research indicates that multivitamins can help protect against the cell damage that makes us vulnerable to the development of many diseases common among older adults," said meeting co-chair Jeffrey Blumberg, Ph.D., a professor in the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. "Multivitamins are a safe and effective tool for the promotion of health and prevention of chronic disease."

*Multivitamins and Public Health: Exploring the Evidence*, a two-day meeting held October 1-2, 2003, in Washington, D.C., brought together leading health and nutrition experts from government agencies, top research universities and health advocacy organizations to examine the state of the science supporting daily multivitamin use and help chart the course for future research. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition and was supported by a grant from Wyeth Consumer Healthcare.

The Lewin Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Quintiles Transnational, is a nationally recognized health care and human services consulting firm in Falls Church, Va. The firm specializes in helping public and private sector clients solve complex problems in healthcare and human services with policy analysis, research and consulting.

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i Da Vanzo, J. et al., "A Study of the Cost Effects of Daily Multivitamins for Older Adults," October 2, 2003.

ii Ibid.

iii Ibid.

iv Ibid.

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