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CEDARS-SINAI STUDYING WHETHER OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS CAN HELP DEPRESSION Participants age 18-80 sought for five-year NIH-funded study

LOS ANGELES (Dec. 14, 2007) – Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences are seeking participants for a clinical trial examining whether two polyunsaturated Omega-3 fatty acids are effective treatments for depression.

The two fatty acids being studied -- docosahexanoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentanoic acid (EPA) -- are found naturally in fish oil, flaxseed and walnuts. Previous studies have indicated that nutritional supplements that contain Omega-3 fatty acids can be an effective treatment for depression, but this is the first to systematically test the two specific fatty acids against each other and against placebo in a large sample of people with major depression. DHA and EPA have anti-inflammatory properties and help stabilize brain cell membranes, both of which play a role in mood regulation.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH)-sponsored study, held in collaboration with Massachusetts General Hospital, will recruit a total of 300 adults ages 18-80 who are experiencing significant symptoms of major depressive disorder and are in good health. The five-year study is designed to test the safety, effectiveness and tolerability of DHA and EPA against each other and a placebo. Participants will receive one of the two drugs or a placebo for eight weeks in a randomized, double-blind manner.

Major depression affects at least 15 percent of the adult population. Unlike normal emotional experiences of sadness, loss or passing mood states, major depression is persistent and can significantly interfere with an individual’s thoughts, behavior and physical health. While it can be effectively treated, it is a leading cause of disability in the U.S. and in many other countries.

The Cedars-Sinai team, lead by principal investigator and department chair Mark Hyman Rapaport, M.D., will examine the effect of the therapies on participants’ symptoms, quality of life and psychosocial function. They will also examine how fatty acids in the blood and proteins involved in immune function are affected by Omega-3s. Participants will receive free and confidential evaluation and treatment as part of the study. No healthcare insurance is required. A comprehensive medical evaluation – including physical examination, laboratory tests and EKG – may be provided at no charge.

“The reported side effects of Omega-3 treatments have been mild and include upset stomach and a fishy taste in the mouth. There do not appear to be risks to the liver or adverse interactions with most other medications,” said Rapaport, though he added that people who have bleeding disorders or who are taking blood thinners should not use Omega-3 fatty acids. “This study is one of several investigations of alternative and

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complementary medicine that our department has pursued over the past decade. Expanding our psychiatry studies to include natural treatments has shown promising benefits to patients suffering from a variety of mental illnesses.”

For more information on the study, call 1-888-CEDARS3 or visit www.cedars-sinai.edu.

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One of only 10 hospitals in California whose nurses have been honored with the prestigious Magnet designation, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For 19 consecutive years, it has been named Los Angeles' most preferred hospital for all health needs in an independent survey of area residents. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and its human research protection program is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). Additional information is available at www.cedars-sinai.edu.

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