

Cranberry Juice and Warfarin: When Bad Publicity Trumps Science

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ABSTRACT

Based on anecdotal reports, the question of whether cranberry juice interacts with warfarin has been raised. This article discusses the potential mechanism, and systematically reviews case reports as well as clinical trials examining the possible interaction. We systematically searched MEDLINE via PubMed, and the Cochrane Library database. Fifteen case reports were summarized, including the initial unpublished brief reports to the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the subsequent 6 published case reports. Seven clinical trials were analyzed, including 3 studies using warfarin and 4 surrogate drugs. Only 2 cases had a validation scale suggesting a "probable" interaction, but even in these patients there were many reasons to question the validity of a relevant drug interaction. Randomized clinical trials and surrogate markers found no evidence to support the interaction between cranberry juice and warfarin. Because the moderate consumption of cranberry juice does not affect anticoagulation, we encourage the reexamination of initial warnings based on scientific evidence. We conclude that the initial precautionary warnings by administering bodies are limited to anecdotal case reports and represent misleading conclusions.

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