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Contact: Season Solorio at 202-204-7682

**THE BEST PRACTICE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION
IS PRACTICING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

—CRN Encourages Shift in the Current Research Paradigm for Supplemental Nutrients —

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 25, 2008 — *In response to recently released scientific studies, which have examined the efficacy of individual vitamin supplements for preventing chronic diseases, such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), the leading trade association representing the dietary supplement industry, issued the following statement.*

Statement by Andrew Shao, Ph.D., vice president, scientific and regulatory affairs, CRN:

“The very nature of science is that it is an evolutionary discipline—we learn things from one study, and then seek to confirm those results, look in a different direction, or test for even more possibilities. Over the past several decades, a series of observational trials resulted in exciting prospects for the benefits of antioxidant vitamins and chronic disease. These encouraging results led the scientific community to conduct the recently released randomized, controlled trials (RCTs), which seemed to be the next logical step. While everyone—researchers, industry, and consumers—would have been thrilled to see the positive findings from observational studies confirmed, this has not been the case. This leads to more intrigue for the scientific community—to try to determine why the results from these recent RCTs are in apparent conflict with the existing body of data.

One explanation is that the effects of nutrients in the human body are complex and influenced by many variables. Understanding the causality of chronic disease is equally complex. RCTs may be inherently limited in their capacity to address the unique challenges presented by nutrients and dietary interventions. Nutrients appear to work best in combination with other nutrients, yet RCTs tend to examine effects of unique chemical molecules in isolation—which is how pharmaceuticals work. Further, in using RCTs to study nutrition questions, there is the challenge of being able to create a true control or placebo group. For example, in contrast to pharmaceuticals, it is both impossible and unethical to ensure participants in the control group are not exposed at any level to vitamins and minerals.

This leads us to the question, ‘what should consumers do?’ The best advice for consumers is to engage in a lifetime of healthy habits—like not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a well-balanced diet and appropriately supplementing with vitamins, regular exercise, and regular visits to a physician. These appear to be best practices. Vitamins play a vital role in promoting overall general health and filling specific nutrition gaps. Despite the results from recent studies, there is additional research that suggests antioxidant vitamins may play a role in helping to lower the risk of chronic diseases. However, vitamin supplements are just one piece of the puzzle, which may be why we didn’t see the results we anticipated from the recent clinical trials.

Perhaps we need to revise our expectations that one single healthy habit will serve as a ‘magic bullet’ and allow us to live disease-free—after all, one piece does not complete the whole puzzle, but we certainly don’t discard the piece just because it doesn’t fit in a particular spot. Within the research community and academia, we encourage scientists to engage in additional studies that are designed to answer questions about the effects of nutrients on chronic disease and explore the apparent inconsistencies created by the existing research. Scientists, policymakers, healthcare professionals and consumers alike should continue to question commonly accepted research models, such as: whether the current approach used in RCTs of studying nutrients in isolation is appropriate; whether observational data are adequate to make policy decisions as is the case with food; and whether we’re studying the appropriate populations or subgroups, with the appropriate dosage and combination of nutrients for the correct length of time are other questions. There are still many more questions to be answered. Science is constantly evolving and by shifting the current paradigm of disease research to a paradigm of nutrition and prevention, we can better aid consumers in living healthier lives.”

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Note to Editor: To arrange an interview with Andrew Shao, Ph.D., CRN's vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs, please contact Season Solorio at 202-204-7682.

The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), founded in 1973, is a Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing dietary supplement industry ingredient suppliers and manufacturers. CRN members voluntarily adhere to a code of ethics and manufacture dietary supplements to high quality standards under good manufacturing practices.