EVALUATION OF OSTRICH OIL FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

Professor Tertius Brand from the Elsenburg Animal Production Research Institute, Mrs Suzanne Abimosleh from the University of Adelaide in Australia, Professor Louw Hoffman from the University of Stellenbosch and Dr Adriaan Olivier from Ostrimed (Klein Karoo Co-operative) in Oudtshoorn are collaborating in the evaluation of ostrich fat (oil) for medical purposes.

Samples of ostrich oil from South Africa were sent to Australia for evaluation, together with other oils in controlled experiments. Mrs Abimosleh’s previous indicated that emu oil improved selected parameters of colonic integrity in a rat model of colitis. The promising results obtained from this preliminary study suggested therapeutic promise for emu oil to augment conventional chemotherapy preventive treatment options for potential cancer sufferers.

Mrs Abimosleh commenced a Doctor of Philosophy in Medicine at the University of Adelaide (in 2009) under the primary supervision of Professor Gordon Howarth. Her project mainly focuses on the application of emu oil to treat various bowel diseases including chemotherapy-induced mucositis and NSAID-enteropathy. Mucositis is a debilitating condition which occurs as a side effect of chemotherapy or radiation therapy. This condition significantly reduces the quality of life of cancer patients undergoing treatment, and is one of the most important factors in morbidity and mortality, as severe mucositis can lead to systemic infection and malnutrition. There are currently no effective treatments for gastrointestinal mucositis.

A quality control study of different emu oil batches and a preliminary study conducted on ostrich oil as well as different other ratite oils will also be conducted.

Mrs Abimosleh’s research may represent a new mechanism of action for emu oil, ostrich oil as well as other ratite oils in protection and repair from injury, indicating its therapeutic potential for gastrointestinal diseases.

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