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Fish oil given within 5 hours after stroke limits brain damage

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A new study has pointed out that fish oil contains a substance that may help to limit or prevent brain damage following a stroke, if given within 5 hours after the stroke.

Dr Nicolas Bazan at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center said docosahexaenoic acid -- a component of fish oil -- is a powerful therapeutic agent that can protect brain tissue and promote stroke recovery, even when treatment is delayed by up to five hours.

"We are just now beginning to understand the significant impact of omega-3 essential fatty acids on stroke. There is no simple solution just yet, but each new discovery brings us closer to defeating stroke and other debilitating neurodegenerative diseases," said Bazan.

These findings not only target a new stroke treatment approach, but also provide vital information about the length of the therapeutic window.

To determine how DHA might be effective in stroke treatment and recovery, Bazan and his colleagues compared DHA and saline administered intravenously at 3, 4, 5, and 6 hours after the onset of stroke.

MRIs showed that neurological deficits were reduced by the administration of DHA. It also reduced swelling and facilitated neurobehavioral recovery.

The area of destroyed tissue was reduced by an average of 59% at 5 hours.

The research is published in the *Translational Stroke Research*.

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