

GUEST ARTICLE

## Not just industry slamming omega-3-prostate cancer links

By Alan Ruth, PhD, 15-Jul-2013

Related topics: Nutritional lipids and oils, Cancer risk reduction, Research, Omega-3

**Reaction to last week's study linking omega-3 with prostate cancer have been vociferous and near-unanimous in condemning its methods and conclusions. Here Alan Ruth, PhD, and CEO of the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA), explains why that condemnation was justified and not just sourced from an industry concerned with defending its own patch.**

It is to be welcomed that a very eminent professor at Harvard Medical School, who is also an internationally recognised prostate cancer expert, has also slammed the study.

Anthony D'Amico, professor of Radiation Oncology at Harvard Medical School and chief of Genitourinary Radiation Oncology at the Brigham and Women's Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, has gained international notoriety for his work in detection and treatment of prostate cancer in more than 140 peer-reviewed publications, and he has co-edited four textbooks in Urologic Oncology.

After the [study](#) was published last week, the American syndicated radio talk show host Michael Savage interviewed Professor D'Amico on his show, *The Savage Nation*.

Savage is also somewhat of an academic 'expert' himself, in that he holds master's degrees in Medical Botany and Medical Anthropology, and a PhD in Nutritional Ethnomedicine. As Michael Weiner (his birth name), he has written books on herbal medicine and homeopathy.

### Bogus?

Before interviewing Professor D'Amico, Savage began by stating: *"There is a very, very dangerous report out there, that many of you have panicked over, about fish oils and what happened was, the idiots in the media immediately jumped on this assistant professor's opinion that fish oil is somehow related to prostate cancer risk, which nothing could be further from the truth."*

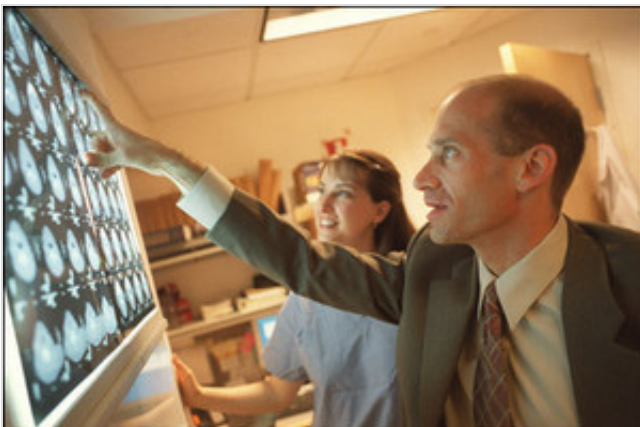
*"It's a completely, let's put it to you this way; it's junk science. It was picked up by every media outlet in the country, hook line and sinker, just like the fish that they are."*

*"You are going to say my opinion isn't good enough. First of all I have a PhD in Epidemiology and Nutrition. This is right up my alley. I read the original publication ..... it's a bogus study."*

*"If my expertise isn't sufficient for you .....we are going to have an expert with an MD, PhD whose speciality happens to be prostate cancer .....with a great Harvard degree and he will tell you what he thinks."*

During the course of the interview, Michael Savage asked Professor D'Amico what his position is on the "so called study on fish oil and prostate cancer?" He also asked him a number of other pertinent questions. In responding

Professor D'Amico's comments included the following:



Harvard professor Anthony D'Amico: "The study really cannot make the conclusion that it's trying to..."

*"The study really cannot make the conclusion that it's trying to, because these types of studies are not cause and effect; that is, if you take the fish oil you're going to get an aggressive or some kind of prostate cancer."*

*"These studies are simply association and when you have an association type study, the way you strengthen it... is that you try to adjust for that association, for all the things you know can cause prostate cancer."*

*"And this is the main issue with the study. They tried this, but they didn't do it properly...they left out some very important risk factors for prostate cancer..."*

*"So what you're left with at the end of the day is an association that at best is very weak and further weakened by the fact that they didn't account for the known predictors of prostate cancer, when they were making this calculation."*

Dr D'Amico continued: *"The thing that concerns me the most is that you can find almost anything associated with aggressive prostate cancer. You can find that driving a Cadillac [could be linked to it] ...if you don't adjust for the factors that are known to be associated with it, and you know, from a truly scientific standpoint that's what makes this association extremely weak and possibly false."*

Savage was very dismissive of the lead researcher and author of the study, Theodore Brasky PhD). He commented: *"I don't want to knock the guy that wrote it but he is really a kind of lowly assistant professor who I think was looking for some media attention."*

*"The study author had the nerve to write, or was it the Hutchinson Institute 'spokesmouth', said that we even think fish itself might be harmful or dangerous."*

Michael Savage asked Professor D'Amico if the researchers chose a population to study that had already been diagnosed with prostate cancer, or if there was a generalised sample of men, some with and some without prostate cancer. Professor D'Amico responded by saying it was the latter.

Savage followed up by asking *"But how do we know when the men with prostate cancer started taking fish oils? Did they start taking the fish oils after they were diagnosed with prostate cancer or before?"*

Professor D'Amico replied: *"It's not discussed, it's a good point."*

Savage then made the point that many men, when they get sick, suddenly look for anything to help them and start taking fish oils. He then said, *"Does that mean it caused it? Of course not."*

Savage added, *"So the study is really valueless as far as I can tell."*

Professor D'Amico concluded, *"The scientific strength of it is weak, at best."*

You may access a recording of the full interview via the link below. Scroll down when the web page opens.

<http://www.prostate.net/2013/prostate-cancer/omega-3-prostate-cancer-study/>



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