

Rooibos test results to come

Researchers to announce what they have found in trials

THE much anticipated preliminary findings of a clinical trial designed to determine whether Rooibos reduces the risk of heart disease is to be announced at the MTN Sciencentre in Canal Walk.

Copious quantities of the popular red indigenous tea will be served while researchers explain the results of their study that was conducted on forty men and women aged between 30 and 60.

The trial, impressively titled "Modulation of blood oxidative stress markers by Rooibos in volunteers at risk for coronary heart disease" was conducted by Dr Jeanine Marnewick.

She is a senior researcher at the Oxidative Stress Research Centre at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Each of the participants had two or more cardiovascular disease risk factors – raised cholesterol, raised blood pressure, smoking, increased body mass index and/or family history – but did not need any oral medication for these conditions.

The actual risk of each participant was determined using a calculation based on the well-known Framingham heart disease trial, based on the patient's age, gender, smoking status, blood pressure, triglycerides and HDL cholesterol (the so-called "good cholesterol").

A person with two major risk factors has six times as great a risk of heart disease or stroke as someone with no risk factors. With three factors the risk of cardiovascular disease is twenty times as great.

The subjects of the study had to

drink six cups of Rooibos per day for six weeks, with the six cups spread across the day.

Each cup consisted of 200 ml boiling water added to one Rooibos tea bag, brewed for five minutes before drinking.

They were allowed to drink their Rooibos with or without milk and sugar.

Previous research on green and black teas – from the tea plant *Camellia sinensis* – has demonstrated that milk does not interfere with the good stuff.

The beneficial antioxidant chemicals found in Rooibos, black and green tea, as well as chocolate (as every informed chocoholic knows) are called flavonoids, but the flavonoids in Rooibos are different from those in China or Ceylon tea and chocolate.

The six-cup amount of Rooibos

consumed by participants in this trial was based on a human trial published in 2003 where the consumption of six cups of green tea increased the antioxidant capacity in the blood.

Not to get their antioxidants confused, the study subjects had to follow a diet of omission. Flavonoid-rich foods had to be avoided or severely restricted and flavonoid-rich drinks omitted from their diet two weeks before the study was initiated.

This means they had to stay away from apples, citrus fruit and berries, avoid grape products (including red wine!), onions and broccoli, and drink no coffee, tea (black or green) or fruit juice.

The results of this clinical trial will now be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

At the Rooibos Science Cafe scheduled for 10:00 today (26 November), Dr Marnewick will announce the preliminary findings.

Also on the menu is a presenta-

A person with two major risk factors has six times as great a risk of heart disease or stroke as someone with no risk factors. With three factors the risk of cardiovascular disease is twenty times as great.

tion by Dr Carl Albrecht of CANSA on ten years of research on the anti-cancer properties of Rooibos, as well as a honeybush overview by Prof Lizette Joubert of the Agricultural Research Council.