Study says whey protein helps improve body weight, composition

ROSEMONT, Ill. — New research demonstrates the ability of whey protein to help improve body weight and composition when compared to consuming an equal amount of calories from carbohydrates.

The study was funded by the U.S. Whey Protein Research Consortium, of which the Dairy Research Institute is a managing member, and USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The study was conducted by the USDA-ARS Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center and will be published in the *Journal of Nutrition.*

Researchers tracked body weight, body composition and waist circumference data from 73 overweight and obese adults who were assigned to consume a 200-calorie beverage consisting of 28 grams of whey or soy protein plus carbohydrate, or carbohydrate alone, twice a day for 23 weeks. No other dietary direction was given.

At the start of the trial there were no significant differences between the groups. At the end of the trial, the whey protein group's body weight was approximately 4 pounds lower and their body fat was 5 pounds less than the carbohydrate group. Additionally, the whey protein group's waist size was nearly an inch smaller than both the carbohydrate and soy protein groups. Those who consumed soy protein did not exhibit significant differences from the carbohydrate group.

Study data indicate that all groups compensated for the additional 400 calories per day by cutting back on other foods, as none gained a significant amount of weight during the 23-week period. However, the whey protein group likely made up for the added calories from the beverage more effectively, the researchers say, since they showed improvements in body weight and composition compared to the carbohydrate group. This could be related to enhanced satiety with whey protein, as participants in the whey protein group showed significantly lower levels of the hunger-stimulating hormone, ghrelin, compared to the other two groups. CMN