Fibre and Digestive Health
Implications to Pharmacy Practice

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Dietary fibre is widely recognized as beneficial for human health, and high fibre intake is associated with reduced risk for several chronic diseases. Fibre is classified as a nutrient by the Institute of Medicine and Health Canada, and current recommendations are for individuals to consume between 19-38 grams daily, depending on age and gender. However, Canadians’ fibre intake falls dramatically below recommendations, with average intakes by adults and children at about half of the Adequate Intake levels. Additionally, different fibres exert different physiological effects. Traditionally, dietary fibre has been classified according to its solubility. In general, soluble fibres exert benefits on serum lipids, while insoluble fibres are linked to laxation benefits. While not all fibres have the same effect on measures of laxation, fibre originating from wheat bran has been recognized by several authoritative bodies in North America for its importance in promoting laxation. The Institute of Medicine Dietary Reference Intake 2002/2005 report stated, “wheat bran provides more stool per gram of fiber than any other source studied.” Similarly, Health Canada has recognized the superiority and efficacy of wheat bran fibre by granting the approval of a function claim for foods for the promotion of “laxation” or “regularity”. In the US, wheat bran fibre is the only cereal fibre source recognized by the US Food and Drug Administration Laxative Monograph as a source of fibre that promotes regularity. Research also shows that consumers do not distinguish between fibres for the promotion of laxation, and assume that all fibres act equally. The Symposium will showcase findings from the most recent research involving dietary fibre, with particular focus on the impact of wheat bran fibre on bowel function and overall digestive health. Practical application to pharmacy practice will also be addressed regarding the role of wheat bran fibre in alleviating constipation, a common side effect of prescription and over-the-counter medications.

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References


