Supplements can cut health care costs, report finds.

The Congressional Dietary Supplement Caucus in conjunction with the leading dietary supplement industry associations held a briefing yesterday for members of Congress to drive home the point that supplements are not only good for users' health, but good for the nation's health care bottom line, too.

The briefing, titled *"Smart Prevention: Health Care Cost Savings Utilizing Dietary Supplements,"* was held by the DSC and the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA), the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), the Natural Products Association (NPA), and the United Natural Products Alliance (UNPA).

The message given to Congressional staffs was backed by data gather in the recent Frost and Sullivan survey commissioned by the CRN Foundation that showed that demonstrated that supplementation at preventive intake levels in high-risk populations can reduce the number of medical events associated with heart disease, age-related eye disease, diabetes, and bone disease in the United States, representing the potential for significant cost savings.

High engagement

Mike Greene, the vice president of government relations for CRN, said the message seemed to get through. Such briefings tend to be high traffic affairs, with Congressional staffers coming and going as competing needs arise for their time.

"Typically staff members are very busy. I was interested in the simple fact that people stayed. We weren't talking about the health benefits of dietary supplements, but we were talking about the economic benefits of dietary supplements," Green told NutraIngredients-USA.

Part of the meeting consisted of a presentation of the report's findings by Steve Mister, president and CEO of CRN, and included a statement by John Shaw, executive director of NPA.

"Chronic diseases are one of the greatest contributors to health care costs in this country," said Mister. *"If we can identify and motivate those at risk to effectively use dietary supplements, we can control rising societal health care costs, but also give sick individuals a chance to reduce the risk of costly events and, most importantly, to improve their quality of life."*

The new report by economic firm Frost & Sullivan that examined four different chronic diseases and the potential for health care cost savings when U.S. adults, 55 and older, diagnosed with these chronic diseases, used one of eight different dietary supplement regimens.

Systematic review

The report , performed a systematic review of hundreds of scientific studies on eight dietary supplement regimens across four diseases to determine the reduction in disease risk from

these preventive practices. The firm then projected the rates of medical events across the high-risk populations and applied cost benefit analyses to determine the cost savings if people at high risk took supplements at preventive intake levels.

The report, demonstrated that supplementation at preventive intake levels in high-risk populations can reduce the number of medical events associated with heart disease, age-related eye disease, diabetes, and bone disease in the United States, representing the potential for significant cost savings. Calculated potential savings in health care costs ranged as high as $3.9 billion for omega-3 supplements in the reduction of significant cardiac disease events.

"Nutritional supplements proactively contribute to the overall health and well-being of American consumers. But as we can see from this data, the benefits of supplementation are much more far-reaching," Shaw said.

"I've always known that dietary supplements have benefits. Most people know that. But by doing this report we've shown that dietary supplements can reduce health care costs as well. This information is new and its fresh and it's interesting to see how it has been received," Greene said.