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## **Cancer Patients Compel Physicians To Take A Closer Look At Emu Oil**

Investigative Focus by Beth Silva

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The topic of emu oil in medical applications was recently addressed by Elton J. Lormand, M.D. at the American Oil Chemists Society Annual Meeting & Expo held in San Diego on April 27. Dr. Lormand is currently conducting research at the Advanced ENT & Facial Surgery Institute in Cullman, Alabama.

Lormand's discourse "Potential Medical Applications of Emu Oil" included a discussion on observational science, double blind studies and anecdotal accounts of emu oil. The doctor also discussed patient response and addressed the areas of potential benefit of emu oil in the medical field including radiation oncology, cosmetic skin therapy, rheumatology and hypercholesterolemia.

The physician relates that to date, he has experienced only anecdotal personal experience with emu oil, yet "extreme patient excitement compels a closer look."

### **Patients Speak Out**

Incredibly, it was Lormand's head and neck radiation therapy cancer patients who first introduced him to emu oil. Coincidentally, patients of the radiation oncologist ( and member of Dr. Lormand's research team ) were also using emu oil- without either physician's prior knowledge.

Regarding emu oil Lormand remarks, "Our patients are basically directing our efforts. It's not something that I would have been inclined to pursue on my own investigate but our patients are convinced that there's a benefit to this. So now we actually encourage them to use it during their treatment protocol, but we're not doing that based on scientific data- the patients simply offered the opportunity. Most patients who intend to use it have

pretty much been made aware of the oil before we even mention it to them. There are many cancer patients and they find out about each other, and emu oil is one of the things they find out about so they'll often ask us about it before we even mention it. As far as the radiation oncologist, he basically has a patient apply the emu oil prior to treatment. However, none of the patients use the oil unless he approves of it."

Regarding the use of emu oil for treatment Lormand relates that the patients themselves came up with their own applications.

"I give them no specific instructions on how to use it," concedes the physician. "The patients who do use it use it at their own direction. They basically apply it 20 minutes prior to their radiation treatment and some patients actually ingest emu oil for the benefit of the mucosal surfaces. I don't recommend the ingestion of emu oil because I have no data to support the procedure. But for patients who have used it, the damaged mucosa side of the burn is actually lessened as well."

Lormand relates that some patients apply emu oil to the afflicted area after radiation. "Apparently they come up with their own regime," he says, "and the trend, I guess if there is one, would be toward applying it to their skin on a more frequent basis."

The physician stresses that his view regarding recommending the use of emu oil at this point is more of a neutral one.

"Our position had been," It is not likely to harm you we just don't know if it will help you." But the result in the patients we have seen basically has been one of less burn than would be normally anticipated from the radiation dose. But the number of patients I'm talking about is not statistically significant, yet there's enough of a difference in my mind to compel a closer look.

#### More Research Needed

Because his patients "suggested that what they're seeing is real" and in order "to determine whether that is true from a scientific viewpoint or not," Lormand says that the use of emu oil in treatment requires further research.

"There is interest and that interest is based on observationally results as well as patient reports but the use of emu oil in my mind had only generated a question of benefit, and in order to answer that question, research is going to need to be done," emphasized Lormand. "Multiple purported applications will require multiple research efforts. Anecdotal evidence may serve as a starting point only."

Lormand, along with his associate radiation oncologist, has decided to form an investigatory team to take a closer look at the potential benefits of emu oil. The team is now designing a single pilot, double blind study to assess the benefits of emu oil in radiation therapy with an "objective evaluation of skin biopsies in radiation therapy fields with and without topically applied emu oil and placebo." The patients will also serve as

the control and the end point will focus on histological criteria. Lormand relates that the research project is currently at the institutional review board level. He comments, "We'll develop some preliminary data and if the data looks promising we'll petition for a grant to conduct a larger multi-center assessment study, which potentially would be at multiple sites around the nation. From those results may develop other studies. For example there may be some endeavor to try to figure out what it is about emu oil that causes the benefits.

Adds the doctor, "It appears at this point that emu oil is anti-inflammatory- that it's dealing with the inflammatory effects of the radiation therapy however, this is only an hypothesis at this time."

### The Future Holds the Answer

Whether or not emu oil has any benefits to cancer patients receiving radiation treatment, Lormand feels that they are just at the preliminary stages of investigation.

"The methods for determining benefit are well established in the scientific method, " he says, " and due diligence is now needed to extract the answers good or bad. With a pilot study we should have results a years after the study is underway. Regarding any potential beneficial results of the study, the future holds the answer."

Elton John Lormand, M. D. is an ear, nose and throat surgeon and facial plastic surgeon who specializes in aesthetic surgery in laser resurfacing and laser hair and tattoo removal.

Dr. Lormand currently conducts his practice at Advanced ENT & Facial Surgery Institute in Cullman, AL and is certified by the American Academy of Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Surgery. He is also a member of the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy and the American Medical Association.

Dr. Lormand initially became acquainted with emu oil through his practice year ago. His practice has been very innovative in introducing to the community several advanced head and neck cancer, laser assisted sinus surgery and tonsil/adenoid removal and comprehensive facial plastic and reconstructive surgery.