



# EXCLUSIVE

## Additive puts readers in line for ‘ODT’ obesity link

*By Stu Oldham*

A printing additive used exclusively today by the Otago Daily Times is part of a medical breakthrough that could safely turn wet newspapers into a key weapon in the fight against fat, German researchers say.

The back page of today’s issue has been printed with the locally produced vegetable-based fixing agent, and has been perforated so readers can tear it, wet it, and wrap it to test the remarkable, just-released claim.

The international medical fraternity will test it themselves when the research is published in the respected New Hampshire Medical Journal this month, but Dunedin is already equipped to capitalise on the windfall opportunity.

“If this works as they say, then this breakthrough could spawn a whole new industry that would be huge for the city,” Otago Daily Times print room supervisor Dean McStub said. “And it will all come from something that has been right under our noses.”

Public health researchers from the Lacinex Institute in Heidelberg discovered the “fat-burning” qualities of the fixing agent AF-1405 last month as they entered the 21st year of a 25-year study on global workplace health.

Lead researcher Prof Viktor Leptin said the Otago Daily Times print room was the only one among 1500 workplaces monitored worldwide whose workers had “had no perceivable predilection toward obesity”.

“The results were quite astounding. While some workplaces, notably in the United States and England, had late-life obesity rates of up to 72%, it was less than 2% for the workers at the Dunedin site,” Prof Leptin explained.

“That was an incredible result for us, especially given the changes in lifestyle over the 21-year period, which is why we had to examine the total work environment.”

Fourteen of the 32-strong research team spent five weeks at the newspaper late last year, testing everything from air quality to the composition of the compounds used in the printing process.

They also analysed a fixing agent printers first produced at the newspaper during the 1976 oil shock, which test results last month confirmed “had a direct and quite rapid effect on visible body fat”, Prof Leptin said.

Researchers were still “some way” from understanding how it worked, but it appeared it was easily absorbed by the skin, to turn visible fat into waste which was “then passed through the kidneys in the normal way”, Prof Leptin said.

The compound was activated by water, which meant even the dampened pages of the newspaper could be used to “literally burn the fat away” — something Prof Leptin suggested readers tried today.

“Initial work suggests that something as simple as a damp newspaper wrapped around the target area will reduce upper-level fat within 42 hours. Again, this is a preliminary finding, but what work we have done suggests this is a very exciting and realistic discovery indeed.”

Lawyers yesterday advised details about the compound, which uses Otago swedes as a base, will stay secret until it is patented.

The accounts of the press room workers were being suppressed pending release of the research on the medical journal’s website this morning, Prof Leptin said.

Prof Leptin said he would explain the breakthrough in simple terms on Dunedin radio station More FM 97.4 at noon, before he leaves the city for the 32nd International Employment Health Congress tonight.

¿ The Otago Daily Times invites readers to wrap themselves in the wet back page, and test the claims themselves. Feedback should be sent to the Otago Daily Times at [news@odt.co.nz](mailto:news@odt.co.nz), or phone 467-7123. Questions to Prof Leptin can also be passed to More FM at [elvis@morefm.co.nz](mailto:elvis@morefm.co.nz), or by phoning 474-4000.



**PHOTO: GERARD O'BRIEN**

Miracle cure? . . . Otago Daily Times press operator Hans Rosloot adds fixing agent to a press unit yesterday morning. Scientists say the compound could also help people shed fat.



Lacinex Institute researcher Prof Viktor Leptin