Does Creatine Supplementation Increase Muscle Strength in Women?

Tricia Cross

Eastern Illinois University

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Does Creatine Supplementation Increase Muscle Strength

In Women?
(TITLE)

BY

Tricia Cross

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to see if creatine supplementation increased muscular strength in women. Ten females were assigned to either a creatine (CG) or a placebo (PG) group with five subjects in each. The study lasted five weeks with one week of pre-testing, three weeks of creatine use which included one week of loading (12-13 g/day for seven days) and two weeks of maintenance (3-4 g/day for 14 days), and one week of post testing. Pre- and post-test strength were measured with a one repetition maximal lift (1RM) on the bench press and the leg press. All subjects were required to perform a 20-minute warm-up before 1RM measurements to help avoid injury. Each subject then completed two warm-up sets with the bench press or leg press to prepare the working muscle for the 1RM test. After warm-up sets, each subject then completed one repetition lifts until their max lift was attained. Subjects were required to rest a minimum of two minutes in between lifts. No subject performed more than four, one repetition lifts. Over the course of the three-week study, all subjects performed similar workout routines. The results of the post-test 1RM values were not significant between the two groups. The CG increased their mean leg press 1RM (70 ± 47.2 lbs.) and mean bench press 1RM (12 ± 2.2 lbs.). The PG increased their mean leg press 1RM (56 ± 12.7 lbs) and mean bench press 1RM (8 ± 2.8 lbs). Although the PG started and ended with a greater 1RM, the CG displayed a larger mean relative average than did the PG. The CG
increased their relative average for the bench press and leg press by 11.3% and 18.6%, respectively compared to the Pl increases of 6.5%, 13.2%, respectively. It is concluded that three weeks of creatine supplementation in women failed to significantly increase leg press and bench press strength greater than a placebo.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Creatine has become popular among athletes and non-athletes as a strength enhancement supplement. Despite its popularity, there remains unanswered questions as to its effectiveness, particularly in women.

Creatine’s Role In The Body

Creatine’s value to physical performance is its ability to maintain energy stores during sprints, resistance training, and other high intensity events lasting approximately 30 seconds or less (Kreider, et al., 1998b). Creatine is stored in the skeletal muscles in one of two forms. One third is present as free creatine, which “floats” freely inside the muscle while two thirds is in phosphocreatine (PC) (Kreider, et al., 1998b; Poortmans, Auquier, Renaut, Durussel, and Brisson, 1997; Mujika and Padilla, 1997). On average, the skeletal muscles store about 125 mmol/kg dm with approximately 150–160 mmol/kg dm being the maximum amount stored (Greenhaff, 1995). The total concentration of creatine inside the body depends on the amount of muscle mass in the body and the amount of creatine in the diet.
In its raw state, creatine is useless to the body until it is converted into PC by the enzyme creatine kinase. By the addition of a high-energy phosphate group, creatine becomes PC which can react with adenosine diphosphate (ADP) to form adenosine triphosphate (ATP). By producing more ATP, additional energy is available to the cells for stronger muscle contractions (Maughan, 1995).

The Creatine Theory

It is known that creatine is part of the anaerobic metabolism which provides short, intense bursts of energy (Kreider, et al., 1998b). It has also been suggested that creatine may buffer fatigue causing lactic acid, thus increasing the total time to muscle exhaustion (Newsholme and Beis, 1996; Maughan, 1995). Therefore, supplementing the diet with creatine and filling the muscle cells to their maximum could provide additional energy for an individual during anaerobic activities.

Speculations have been made as to why higher PC stores may increase muscular strength gains. Several studies (Hultman, Soderlund, Timmone, Cederblad, and Greenhaff, 1996; Greenhaff, Bodin, Soderlund, and Hultman, 1994; Kreider, et al., 1998b; Maughan, 1995; Volek, Kraemer, Bush Boetes, Incledon, Clark, and Lynch, 1997b) suggest that it may be due to faster PC resynthesis during exercise as PC is used up in the muscle. Once most of the PC is gone ATP can no longer be generated fast enough and fatigue sets in. Furthermore, since PC resynthesis begins immediately after exercise PC stores are nearly full within a few minutes (Greenhaff, et al., 1994). Therefore, higher levels of PC could also allow for faster recovery. Greenhaff, et al.
(1994) were able to demonstrate that after several days of creatine supplementation creatine stores were 30% higher at the end of the recovery period than before supplementation.

Creatine supplementation has been shown to increase muscle size and fat free mass (FFM) due to an increase in water retention (Hultman, et al., 1996). Creatine attracts water as it enters the muscle cell which would increase the actual size of the muscle by means other than protein synthesis. Many individuals experience increased muscle edema during workouts when supplementing their diet with creatine (Volek, 1997b). However, such gains in muscle size may not necessarily lead to increases in muscular strength. Other studies have also theorized that creatine supplementation increases FFM due to an increase in protein synthesis (Clark, 1997; Ingwall, 1976; Volek and Kraemer, 1996; Volek et al., 1997a, 1997b).

Some short-term creatine studies (typically 20 g/day for 5-7 days) have shown a five to eight percent increase in speed or power output in all out sprints in men. During sets of multiple repetitions it has been observed that workloads can be increased by 5-15%. For all out one repetitious power lifts and vertical jumping, improvements of up to five to ten percent have been noted. For long-term creatine studies (typically 20 g/day for 5-7 days for loading and 2-25 g/day up to three months for maintenance), gains in single bouts of power and strength are increased by as much as 5-15% (Kreider, 1998a). The majority of studies which investigated the effects of creatine used male recreational bodybuilders, powerlifters, and collegiate athletes. Therefore, it is not surprising that the affects of creatine in women are uncertain at best.
Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that many women enjoy bodybuilding and power lifting and that many female collegiate athletes possibly supplement their diet with creatine, few studies have investigated the effects of creatine supplementation in women. The purpose of this study was to see if three weeks of creatine supplementation improved maximal strength gains in women.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that compared to a placebo, women supplementing with creatine will show greater maximal strength gains in the bench press and leg press.

Delimitations

Only ten female collegiate subjects were used in this study. Initially, collegiate athletes were the desired population, because of the controversy over creatine supplementation, all athletes were not allowed to participate in the study by coaches and athletic training personnel. Therefore all of the subjects used for the study were females from the Eastern Illinois University student body and were not of the same fitness level.

Most subjects were not strength trained and needed to be shown how to perform the main two lifts for the study which added a possible “learning effect” to the results.

It was difficult to provide the subjects with their respective supplement while keeping the study double-blinded.
Limitations

It was assumed that all subjects performed all lifts correctly without direction and guidance from a more highly trained person and that all participants followed all instructions for workouts and supplementation.

Creatine stores were not measured inside the muscles of the subjects. Therefore, it was assumed that all creatine stores were similar for all subjects.

It was assumed that the diets of the subjects remains unchanged throughout the study.

Definitions of Terms

**ATP (adenosine triphosphate)** – A compound containing adenine, ribose, and three phosphate groups found in cells. The chemical bonds of the phosphate groups store energy needed by the cell for muscle contractions (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

**ADP (adenosine diphosphate)** – A compound containing adenine, ribose, and two phosphate groups. ADP occurs in cells and is involved in processes requiring the transfer of energy (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

**Bench-Press** – A muscular exercise that stresses and strengthens the muscles of the chest, shoulders, and the upper arm muscles.
**Creatine phosphate** – Intramuscular substance involved with energy production. The phosphate (creatine phosphate, phosphocreatine (PCr)) acts as a high-energy source in muscle and serves to maintain adequate amounts of ATP, the source of energy for muscular contractions (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

**Creatinine** – A waste product derived from creatine and creatine phosphate in the muscle (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

**Creatine kinase** – An enzyme involved in the metabolic breakdown of creatine to creatinine (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

**Lactic acid** – A fatigue causing compound formed in the cells as a by product of anaerobic glycolysis.

**Loading phase** – A phase when higher dosages of creatine are consumed to create a fast influx of creatine into the muscles.

**Leg press** – A muscular exercise that stresses and strengthens the muscles of the hip and knee (e.g. the quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluteus maximus)

**Maintenance phase** – A phase of creatine which low dosages of creatine are use to maintain creatine levels in the muscles.
Muscle fatigue – A decrease in muscular force production that may be due to the accumulation of waste products in the muscles, dehydration, hyperthermia, neural fatigue, and depletion of energy stores (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).

1RM (one repetition maximum) – The maximal amount of weight an individual can lift one time with a maximal effort.

Placebo – A substance that is ineffective but given to mimic the protocol followed with an experimental drug or supplement (Bantam Medical Dictionary, 1994).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if creatine supplementation increased maximal strength in women. Background on the role of creatine in the body, studies looking at strength gains in men taking creatine, and the few studies involving women and creatine supplementation are reviewed here.

A Brief History

A scientist named Chevreul discovered the existence of creatine in 1835. It was not until 1847 that Liebig discovered creatine was an extract contained in the muscle cells of humans and animals. In the late 1920’s, Fiske and Subbarrow discovered that phosphocreatine was an important factor in providing energy for muscle contractions and that the amount of phosphocreatine decreased during muscle contraction and increased during recovery. Fiske and Subbarrow also showed that when creatine was consumed, very little was actually excreted by the body. Collectively, it was determined that creatine plays an important role in energy production of muscle tissue and needs to be replenished (Greenhaff, 1995; Balsom, Soderlund, and Ekblom, 1994).
Creatine and Medical Research for Diseases

Studies have also researched creatine supplementation and PCr administration and its effects on heart disease. Several of the studies showed that intravenous PCr administration improved myocardial metabolism and reduced signs of ventricular fibrillation in patients who have ischemic hearts. (Andrews, Greeaff, Curtis, Pery, Cowley, 1998; Constantin-Teodosiu et al., 1995; Conway and Clark, 1996; Ferraro et al., 1996; Horn et al., 1998; Gordon et al., 1995; Schaufelberger and Swedberg, 1998). It has been suggested that creatine may decrease the injury to ischemic cells by allowing them to work at a higher level without damaging the cell. It is also known that PCr has been administered intravenously from time to time as a treatment during heart patients' therapy (Saks et al., 1996).

Creatine supplementation was used in patients with chronic heart failure to see how it affected the function of the heart and the ability to exercise. It did not seem to improve any patients with an ejection fraction of 40% or less but did show significant increases in knee extensions (21%), peak torque (5%) and cycle ergometry (10%) (Gordon, et al., 1995).

In an area that is relatively new to creatine studies, researchers found that after creatine supplementation, patients with neuromuscular disease showed significant improvements in anaerobic exercises such as handgrip, dorsiflexion, and knee extension and in high-intensity aerobic exercise (Tarnopolsky, Roy, and MacDonald, 1997; Tarnopolsky and Martin, 1999). There is still much more research to be done in this field.
Spila, Rapola, Simell, and Vannas (1981), demonstrated that patients with gyrate atrophy (an eye disorder) who received 1 gram (gm) of creatine a day for one year not only showed a reversal of the atrophy of type II muscle cells but also noticed an improvement in skeletal muscle strength (Balsom et al., 1994; Hultman, et al., 1996). However, it has only been within the last few years that creatine has become popular in the world of bodybuilding and sports in general as a possible strength enhancement supplement.

**Creatine Sources**

Creatine is naturally found in the body and it is a mixture of three different amino acids, arginine, glycine, and methionine (Balsom, 1994; Greenhaff, et al., 1994). Creatine is either produced by the liver, pancreas, and kidneys or it is taken in through the diet. Creatine is only produced endogenously if the diet is not sufficient enough in creatine consumption, such as with vegans (Walker, 1960). When consumed, creatine must be drawn out of the body’s plasma and into the muscle since they are not capable of producing creatine (Clark, 1998). Creatine is taken into the muscle cell by an active transport against the concentration gradient and once inside it is trapped to ensure creatine concentrations remain elevated (Greenhaff, 1997).

After creatine has been taken up and used by the muscle cells it is broken down into a compound called creatinine, a waste product that is filtered by the kidneys and excreted from the body. However, when ingested in large quantities, the body excretes creatine rather than creatinine in the urine (Harris, Soderlund, and Hultman, 1992). Over a three-day period of creatine supplementation, Harris, et al. (1992) found that the kidneys excreted 40%, 61%, and 68% of the creatine taken per day, respectively. It was
assumed that the creatine not excreted entered the muscle cells. Similar findings were found in other studies (Maganaris and Maughan, 1998; Poortmans et al., 1997). Therefore, as creatine supplementation fills creatine levels inside the muscle, the excess amount is excreted from the body.

How To Take Creatine

Initially the recommended doses of creatine consumption were the same for everyone which involved starting with a loading dosage and then switching to a lower maintenance dose. However, it has been suggested that the doses be adjusted according to individual differences such as body weight, frequency of workouts, and the length and intensity of workouts. In their book Creatine: Nature’s Muscle Builder, Sahelian and Tuttle (1997) came up with a table for the loading phase and maintenance phase showing their recommendations of creatine consumption. While these recommendations do not have to be followed, (more traditional loading and maintenance dosages can be ingested) by incorporating them into a individual’s routine, creatine supplementation may be more efficient than using the standard loading and maintenance dosages.

Studies and Creatine Supplementation

Numerous studies have been conducted since creatine first became popular as a dietary supplement by Experimental and Applied Sciences (EAS) in 1993. Many studies
have scientifically shown that creatine supplementation does work while others have not. In this next section, studies supporting both sides of the creatine issue will be summarized and briefly discussed.

**When Creatine Does Work In Men**

Greenhaff et al. (1993) conducted a study on six subjects divided up into two groups of three. One group took creatine four times daily for five days in doses of five grams per dose. Muscle torque was measured using unilateral knee extensions before and after creatine use. Both groups performed the same test, completing five bouts of 30 reps at maximal velocity. Each subject completed the test three times, once for a preliminary run to base further finding on, then once with the use of a placebo and one last time with the use of creatine. There was a five to seven percent increase in muscle velocity after creatine supplementation but there were no significant differences found in muscle velocity after use of a placebo.

In another study, Kreider et al. (1998b) looked at strength increases in the bench press, squat, and the power clean. For the study, 28 NCAA division IA football players were divided into two groups, placebo group and a creatine group. The subject’s followed a prescribe weight training regimen. Pre- and post-testing lifts consisted of maximal efforts for the bench, squat, and power clean. After 28 days of creatine or placebo supplementation there was a significant difference between the placebo group and the creatine group in the bench press. Conversely, in the squat and power clean movements, no significant differences were found. From the sum total of all the lifts, it
was found that the creatine group showed significant increases in the overall total power gained compared to the placebo group. The placebo group had a total of $1,105 \pm 429$ kg and the creatine group had a total of $1,558 \pm 645$ kg.

In yet another study, Kamber et al. (1999) divided ten well-trained athletic students into a placebo or creatine group. Each subject performed ten, six second sprints with 30-second bouts of rest in between each trial. This protocol was performed once and then after five days of creatine or placebo use. Subjects in the creatine group ingested 20 grams of creatine a day in four separate dosages for five days. After the five days, there was a significant decrease in sprint times for the creatine group ($-3.5 \pm 0.5\%$) while the placebo group showed no significant improvement ($-0.07 \pm 0.4\%$).

Volek et al. (1997b) conducted a study on 14 trained athletes. Two groups of seven were assigned to either a creatine or placebo group. Each group performed the bench press and a jump squat on three separate occasions with six days of rest between each testing trial. During the first two trials, no creatine was consumed. Immediately after the second trial, each group was given either a creatine (25 g/day for six days) or a placebo for six days. The creatine group did not demonstrate significant increases between trial one and trial two, however, they did show significant increases between trials two and three. The placebo group, on the other hand, demonstrated no significant results between any of the three trials. How much of a significant increase there was is not known. It was only stated that there were significant increases in the creatine group.
In fact, creatine supplementation has shown an increase in body mass in all types of individuals, including sedentary individuals. Ziegrnfuss et al. (1998) found a 1.8% significant increase in the total body mass of sedentary omnivorous men after five days of creatine supplementation (35 g/kg of body weight).

When Creatine Doesn’t Work In Men

Some individuals who have used creatine as a dietary supplement have found little or no beneficial gains. Greenhaff et al. (1994) demonstrated why creatine supplementation might not always be effective. Eight male subjects volunteered to have muscle biopsies taken after 32 seconds (s) of electrical stimulation (1.6 s of stimulation with 1.6 s of rest in between each electrical bout) to the upper thigh before and after creatine supplementation (20 g/day for five days). Biopsies were collected at 20, 60, and 120 seconds respectively. At the conclusion of the study, five of eight subject’s total creatine stores were higher. After studying the amounts of creatine stores in the muscle cell before and after supplementation, it was found that the subjects with the most benefits from creatine ingestion were the ones who started out with the lowest creatine concentration stores in their muscles (approximately 120 mmol/kg dm). The subjects showed an average increase of 29 ± 3.0 mmol/kg dm. Three of the eight showed little gain in total creatine stores and no increase in PCr resynthesis. These subjects started out with creatine stores of approximately 125 mmol/kg dm and after five days of creatine ingestion only showed a five percent increase in their total creatine stores.
What causes some individuals to have more or less natural muscle creatine stores is not known. There may be many factors but Greenhaff has noted that women seem to have a higher level of creatine stores and vegetarians have the lowest (Greenhaff, 1995).

Five out of six studies conducted on prolonged swimming activities displayed no ergogenic effects of creatine supplementation (Burk, Pyne, and Telford, 1996; Grindstaff, et al., 1997; Mujika, Charard, Lacoste, Barale, and Geyssant, 1996; Peyrebrune, Nevill, Donaldson, and Cosford, 1998; Thompson, et al., 1996). For these studies, both men and women were used. In fact, most of the swimming studies used women rather than men. The fact still remains, however, that overall there are more creatine studies that used men compared to women.

Cooke, Grandjean, and Barnes, (1995) investigated creatine supplementation in 12 healthy untrained individuals during bicycle sprints. Half the subjects were placed in the creatine group (20 g/day for five days) or placebo group. Each group performed the sprints two times, once before creatine or placebo supplementation and once after. No significant changes were found in sprint performance after five days of creatine supplementation.

Research has demonstrated that caffeine may counter the positive effects of creatine. While the filling of creatine stores was not seem affected by caffeine use, the results did demonstrated that caffeine users produced 10-20% lower torque production. The reasons for this counteraction are not known (Vandenberghe, Van Leemputte, Ban Hecke, Van stapel, and Hespel, 1996).
While creatine has not shown significant improvements in physical performance, the majority of these studies have used aerobic as opposed to anaerobic protocols. Furthermore, the majority of studies that have shown a significant improvement in anaerobic performance have been conducted on male subjects. Whether the improvements are due to creatine’s buffering capacity, PC synthesis or an increase in muscle mass has yet to be determined. However, regardless of the reason, it is logical to assume the same affect would occur in women, yet few studies have looked at creatine affect in women.

When Creatine Does Work In Women

Larson et al. (1998) studied fourteen female soccer players who were divided into two groups, a creatine group (15 g/day for seven days then 5 g/day for 12 weeks) and a placebo group. Subjects performed a series of 300 yard runs during the 12-week study. After the first three to five weeks of the study, subjects displayed significant improvement in their running time but no improvements were seen beyond that.

Mihic, MacDonald, McKenzie, and Donaldson (1998) found positive effects of five days of creatine supplementation (20 g/day) in both men and women. While both showed increases, the men had greater increases in their total body mass and FFM.
Safety

With the use of creatine supplementation, some people have questioned creatine’s safety. This concern was brought about late in 1997 after the deaths of the three collegiate wrestlers. In all three incidences all the athletes were said to have been taking creatine but all autopsies concluded severe dehydration as the cause of death (NCAA News January 5, 1998).

Another concern with creatine use is how it affects the renal system. There have been several studies conducted that looked at creatine and its effects on renal function. As to date, no significant changes or stress on renal function has been found (Poortmans, et al., 1997; Poortmans and Francaux, 1999; Pritchard and Kalra, 1998; Kuehl, Goldberg, and Eliot, 1998)

Not to be misled by these findings, there have been two documented case studies displaying problems with renal function and creatine use. One short article published in The Lancet commented on a 25 year old man admitted into the hospital for renal failure and he stated that he had been using creatine (Pritchard and Kaira 1998). In another case study, a football player with asthma was documented as having elevated serum and urine levels of creatinine and showing signs of renal stress after practicing twice daily (Kuehl, et al. 1998). In either case, none of the complications were irreversible and both patients regained their healthy status after cessation of creatine use.

There are even some 17-year case studies of gyrate atrophy patients taking creatine with no negative side effects being reported. Unfortunately, there are no written case studies of this. However, Vannas-Sulonen, Sipila, Vannas, Simell, and Rapola
completed a study with these patients who, after five years of creatine use, showed no side effects. Personal contact has been kept with the patients to monitor their health.

The only scientifically documented side effect of creatine found through clinical research, has been weight gain. All other side effects associated with the use of creatine have all been undocumented anecdotal reports by the media and non-scientific publications. Most all of the anecdotal reports of negative creatine side effects have been short-term and of minor significance which ceased upon discontinuation of creatine supplementation. Most of the side effects reported by anecdotal reports are as follows: muscle cramping, stiffness, or spasms, and gastrointestinal pain if too much had been taken at one time (William, Kreider, and Branch et al., 1999).

Summary

Studies looking at creatine and its effects on men dominate this field of study. Searching the literature reveals findings on the affect of creatine in male subjects under most any condition. It is possible to search and find the answer to any question concerning creatine affect on physical performance in men. However, with women, the studies are few and far between. Most of these studies, tend to be geared more towards aerobic activities as opposed to anaerobic. Therefore, a need for scientific studies looking at creatine’s affect on women is warranted. Furthermore, there is no scientific support for creatine supplement being a health risk, yet little information is available as to creatine’s safety in women.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Methodology

This study's main objective was to compare maximal strength changes among college age females at Eastern Illinois University while supplementing their diet with either creatine or a placebo for three weeks.

Overview of subjects

Twelve female subjects between the ages of 20 and 24 years of age with a mean age of 21.3 ± 1.3 years were recruited from the university student body. All subjects were required to be female and in good health. The study was conducted as a double blind study to reduce the chance of the investigator skewing the results by either encouraging or discouraging the subjects. Six subjects were randomly assigned to either the creatine group (CG) or the placebo group (PG).
Description of Research Design and Procedures

All subjects were required to complete and sign a health history questionnaire and an informed consent form explaining the details, risks and benefits of the study (Appendix A and B).

Testing

Prior to initial strength tests each subject was required to do a ten-minute aerobic warm-up and then approximately ten more minutes of stretching to reduce risk of injury during maximum lifts. The stretches focused on the muscles of the chest, shoulder and upper arms for the upper body and the quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus maximus for the lower body. After completion of the warm-up the subjects were taken to the free weight area of the Student Recreation Center to perform a 1RM for the bench press and leg press. The subjects performed two very light sets of eight to ten repetitions to prepare the muscles for the movement and range of motion used in the lifts. After the warm-up sets were completed, the subjects were then asked to lift a single resistance determined by the investigator to be near their individual maximal effort. At the completion of each repetition the subject was requested to set the barbell back into it’s resting position regardless of if they could perform any further repetitions. The subjects were required to recover at least two to five minutes. After each repetition, the subjects was asked specifically how many repetitions they felt they could have completed if they had been able to finish the set out. Then the weight was increased according to their response.
Responses indicating the possibility of completing ten or more repetitions were increased by ten pounds per side. Responses indicating the possibility of completing between six to ten repetitions were increased by seven and one half pounds per side. Responses consisting of four to six repetitions were increased by five pounds per side and responses consisting of two to four repetitions were increased by two and one half pounds per side. This process was repeated until the subjects felt they could not do a further repetition or they failed their recent repetition. Most subjects reached their 1RM in two attempts but none of the subjects needed more than four.

After each subject's pre-test 1RM was determined, each subject was given a specific strength training program to follow for three weeks (Appendix C). All subjects performed the same exercises for the same number of repetitions and sets. Only the resistance varied based on the subjects' initial strength level.

**Supplementation**

Subjects underwent were three weeks of supplementation. For the CG the first week was a loading phase and the last two weeks were a maintenance phase. The creatine and the placebo supplements were both distributed to the subjects by a Human Performance Lab Graduate Assistant. Both the creatine and placebo were distributed in two forms, a powder form mixed with sugar free lemonade or in capsule form. The capsules were chosen for the weekends when the lab was closed. This allowed the subjects to take their daily dosages at home. During the week, creatine was consumed in powered form and mixed with sugar free lemonade warmed in a microwave for
approximately 30-45 seconds. The placebo consisted of baking soda and sugar mixed with lemonade. Heating the creatine and placebo helped the supplements to dissolve better in the lemonade and minimize noticeable texture differences.

For one week the CG went through an initial loading phase with 12-13 grams of creatine per day. For the following two weeks, subjects consumed either a three to four gram dose per day.

Due to the possibility of stomach upset, the amount of baking soda added to the sugar was just enough to change the flavor of the lemonade. “Take home” doses of the placebo were 12 g/day for two days during the loading phase and two to three grams per day during the maintenance phase.

At the end of the supplementation, the subjects performed post 1RMs following the same procedure as the preliminary 1RM testing.

Other than the addition of creatine or placebo, subjects were asked not to alter or monitored their diet during the course of the study.

Description of Analysis Techniques

A single factor ANOVA with repeated measures was used to calculate the differences between pre and post 1RM of the creatine and placebo groups. Significance was set at the $p = .05$ level. A Macintosh version of Stat View 512+ software was used for statistical analysis.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Some studies have shown significant increases in maximal muscle strength in males (Greenhaff et al., 1993; Kreider et al., 1998b; Kamber et al., 1999; Volek et al., 1997b;) while others have not (Greenhaff, 1994; Cooke et al., 1995; Vandenberghe, 1996). Since the majority of studies have used male subjects the purpose of this study was to compare maximal bench press and leg press strength between subjects given creatine or a placebo.

Findings

Tables 1 and 2 show no significant difference in 1RM for the bench press between CG (107 ± 6.0 lbs.) and PG (108 ± 8.0 lbs.) nor for the 1RM leg press between the CR (362 ± 15.0 lbs.) and PG (432 ± 29.4 lbs.).

Also, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 there was no significant difference between CG and PG in the increase in muscular strength from pre-test to post tests values for the bench press (12 ± 2.2 lbs. and 8 ± 2.8 lbs. respectively) and the leg press (70 ± 47.2 lbs. vs. 56 ± 12.7 lbs., respectively). Although not significantly different, it should be noted that CG showed a larger increase from pre-test to post-test 1RM values than PG for both the bench press and leg press.
Table 1 – Pre- and post-test 1RM values in creatine and placebo groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre 1RM (lbs.)</th>
<th>Post 1RM (lbs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>292 ± 28.0</td>
<td>362 ± 15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>374 ± 44.6</td>
<td>432 ± 29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Pre- and post 1RM values in creatine and placebo groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre 1RM (lbs)</th>
<th>Post 1RM (lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>95 ± 4.5</td>
<td>107 ± 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>101 ± 3.5</td>
<td>108 ± 8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 3 and 4 provide the raw scores of each subject and their percent of improvement in 1RM for the bench press and leg press, respectively.

Table 3 – Raw scores of the subjects’ max lifts and improvements for bench press

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre 1RM (lbs)</th>
<th>Post 1RM (lbs)</th>
<th>Difference (lbs)</th>
<th>Increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Raw scores of the subjects’ max lifts and improvement for leg press

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre 1RM (LBS)</th>
<th>Post 1RM (LBS)</th>
<th>Differences (lbs)</th>
<th>Increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>292</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>374</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures 1 and 2 show the overall increases in pounds and percent improvement for each group and the lifts performed. For the bench press the creatine group increased their 1RM weight by an average of 11.3% while the placebo group increased their weight an average of 6.5%. For the leg press, the creatine group improved their 1RM average by 18.6% and the placebo group showed an average improvement of 13.2%.

While the creatine group displayed larger gains in absolute and relative strength, none of the differences were significant.

![Figure 1. Absolute (lbs) and relative (%) changes between pre and post test for bench press](image1.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference (lbs)</th>
<th>Increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 2. Absolute (lbs) and relative (%) changes between pre and post test for leg press](image2.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference (lbs)</th>
<th>Increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatine</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Side Effects

Due to the concern, some people have with the safety of creatine’s it is noteworthy to report that none of the subjects on creatine expressed any problems while supplementing with creatine. During the course of the study two subjects were force to withdraw with the experiment. One of the subjects dropped out due to time constraints and the other drop by doctor’s orders because of medical problems that arose during time of creatine supplementation. However, later it was found that the medical problems were in no way related to the use of creatine. Some subjects in the PG, however, did experience some stomach upset due to the baking soda during the loading phase. After the loading phase was completed all symptoms of stomach upset ended.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Observations of Findings

This study did not show a statistically significant improvement in maximal muscular strength from creatine supplementation. However, in 21 days of use, the CG showed a $12.0 \pm 2.2$ lbs. (11.3%) increase in the bench press and a $70.0 \pm 47.2$ lbs (18.6%) increase in the leg press which are comparable to the increases found in men.

There could be many reasons for the lack of significance. One reason could be the small sample size of 10 subjects. A larger sample size would have been a more accurate representation of the chosen population and provide greater statistical power.

Another reason may be that the CG had higher stores of creatinephosphate to begin with. This would cause the muscle cells to recruit less of the creatine, thus in turn, inhibiting a larger gain in strength. As previously mentioned in the review of literature section, Greenhaff (1995) stated that women in general seem to have higher creatine stores than do men. Although are unknown, this could be responsible for the insignificant outcome.

There is a possibility that some of the subjects in the CG did not take the supplement as directed. If the subjects in the CG missed enough of their dosages, they may have altered the effectiveness of the supplement.
There could have been errors in the measurement of the 1RM. If too many sets were performed before their true 1RM was reached the subjects’ muscles may have become too fatigued before achieving their true 1RM. Also, some of the subjects could have felt tired or week during that particular 1RM testing and as a result skewed their 1RM. Furthermore, some of the subjects could have figured out which group they were in and thus altering how hard they tried during their post-testing.

It could be that all or some of the subjects were muscurally deconditioned enough that the strength increases for either group were greater than those of a conditioned weight lifter. If conditioned resistance trained females could have been chosen, the results might have been more significant because the lack of a "learning effect". Experienced subjects would have already known how to perform the prescribed lifts and their muscles would have been use to the movement of each lift. In addition, it is theorized that deconditioned muscles respond more rapidly than a conditioned muscle. This could be due to the muscles learning the motion and neural muscular coordination that it takes to teach the muscles how to properly perform each lift. More often than not, novice weight lifters show the greatest gains within the first few months of training due to neural conditioning. After the neural stimulation has been developed, the increase in strength gains slow down or level off.

Another reason for insignificant results could have been due to the design of the workout for the subjects during the study. It may not have been specific enough to produce greater strength gains. The program only consisted of two muscle specific
workouts and one day of general training to include all muscle groups that were not the primary muscles being focused on for the study. This could have led to weak secondary and/or stabilizing muscles, over trained primary muscles, or a combination of the two.

Another reason that may have altered the results of the study could be due to the length of time the subjects supplemented with creatine. Twenty-one days of creatine use may not be enough time for women to display significant results. Volek et al. (1999) demonstrated significant power gains in a 12-week study using 19 resistance-trained men. Subjects consumed 25 g/day for seven days and 5 g/day thereafter until the end of the study. To demonstrate power, two lifts were used, the bench press and the squat. After one week of creatine supplementation the subjects increased their squat by 4%. This was not considered a significant gain, but after 12 weeks of creatine supplementation their squat was significantly increased by 32%. For the bench press, the creatine group showed a significant gain of 5% after just one week. At the end of 12 weeks they had significantly improved their bench by 24%. Therefore, one week of supplementation may not be adequate to see any changes in muscle strength, although when used for longer period of times, the muscular gains seem to become more significant.

One last reason why creatine may not have shown any significant gains in the CG is that it just may not work for women. Considering that Greenhaff (1995) stated that women do have higher stores of creatine than that of men supplementing with creatine just may not provide the added benefit for women as in men.
Suggestions For Further Research

For future studies it is recommended to measure muscle creatine levels before and after supplementation. Additional studies on women and the effects of creatine use are still needed. There are some studies on women now but far fewer than those using men as subjects and many of the studies that did use women as subjects, pertained to cardiovascular endurance and not muscular strength.

Conclusion

Supplementing with creatine over a three-week period failed to show significant increases in maximal arm or leg strength in college aged women. While the majority of studies have involved men, this is one of the few to test creatine's affect in women.

The number of studies proving as well as disproving creatine's affects are closely matched. It's hard to tell which studies are more prevalent. However, the majority of studies showing a positive affect looked at anaerobic strength or power while those showing no affect were from aerobic protocols.

Dr. Richard Kreider at the University of Memphis has prepared a presentation on creatine that presents much of his knowledge and findings that he and his two co-authors, Williams and Branch, found while writing their book: Creatine: The Power Supplement (1999). In his presentation, at http://www.hmse.memphis.edu/faculty/kreider/asep/asep.htm he presents four tables summarizing their findings for creatine and it effectiveness, or lack there of, in all areas (appendix D-G).
Every individual body is different and everyone's body reacts differently to creatine supplementation. There are many reasons why people react differently to the use of creatine. Things to be taken into consideration are the activity levels of the individual, physical fitness level, amount of an existing creatine store inside the muscles, and whether or not they are an omnivore or a vegetarian.

In regards to long-term use and safety, too many people feel that the long-term side effects of creatine use are not known, therefore, its safety is in question. However, the long-term side effects of creatine are known up to 17 years in a non-athletic population. There just have not been any documented studies showing the effects of long-term creatine use in recreational or professional athletes. Studies researching safety should be long-term studies consisting of at least five years or longer.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

**Health History Questionnaire**

**General**

Name: __________________________ Date: __________
Address: __________________________ City: __________ State: __________
Zip: ________ Birth Date: __________ Age: ______ Phone: __________________
E-mail: ________________________

**Medical History**

Check all that apply to either recent or past history to the best of your knowledge

- heart disease ___________________________ peripheral vascular disease __________
- irregular heart beats ___________________________ hypertension (high blood pressure) __________
- defective heart valve(s) ___________________________ cancer __________
- heart murmur ___________________________ type: __________
- pulmonary disease ___________________________ joint pain (especially knee, hip, ankle, shoulder, or elbow) __________
  (Bronchitis, emphysema, etc) ___________________________ list any that apply: __________
- diabetes ___________________________ list any that apply: __________
- epilepsy ___________________________ asthma __________
- high cholesterol ___________________________ exercise induced? __________
- lightheadedness/fainting ___________________________ allergies __________
- fatigue ___________________________ renal problems __________

Is there any chance that you maybe pregnant? __________ yes __________ no

List all surgeries that you have had add their dates to the best of your knowledge: __________

__________________________________________________________________________

List all medications that you are currently taking (including birth control) __________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Are you allergic to any medical medications? __yes __ no  If yes, please list: __________________________

Physician’s name: ___________________________ Phone: __________________________
Emergency contact: __________________________ Relationship: __________________________
Phone(home): ____________ Phone(work): ____________

Family history

Has anyone in your immediate family (parents and/or siblings) had heart disease or a heart attack prior to the age of 50? __yes __ no  If yes, please specify: __________________________

Any family history of the following (blood relatives)

___ diabetes
___ high cholesterol
___ hypertension
___ stroke
___ renal problems

Exercise History

Do you currently exercise on a regular basis __yes __ no
If yes, please specify what you do regularly on a weekly basis: __________________________

How many total minutes of exercise do you per week:

___ <40 minutes
___ 40-60 minutes
___ 61-80 minutes
___ 81-100 minutes
___ >100 minutes

I have read, understood, and completed this questionnaire. Any questions that I had were answered to my full satisfaction.

Name ___________________________ Date _____________
Signature ___________________________ Date _____________
Witness ___________________________ Date _____________
Informed Consent Form

1) The purpose of the experiment-
The purpose of this experiment is to find out if creatine shows strength gains in women as well as in men.

2) Explanation of experiment-
You will be performing two types of weightlifting exercises, the bench press and the leg press. Each test will be performed three times. Once to establish a starting max weight, once halfway through the experiment to see how you are progressing and one last time to determine final max weight. For the experiment, you will be randomly placed on one of two groups; a control group or a creatine group. The experiment will be a double blind test so as to help prevent skewing the results. The first week will be a loading phase of approximately 15 grams of creatine a day. The following three weeks there will be a maintenance phase of approximately 5 grams a day. The experiment will last 28 days. However, the experiment will last a total of six weeks. The week preceding the creatine loading will be used to perform the preliminary max lifts to establish your starting strengths. The sixth week following the last week of creatine consumption will be used to perform final max lifts to find final strength gains. During the course of the experiment your diet is to remain the same. No diet changes are necessary and discouraged.

3) Attendant risks and discomforts-
There exists the possibility of certain risks occurring during the experiment. They include abnormal blood pressure and torn muscles during the lifts and the workouts also, during the workout or while taking the supplement here are some possibilities, muscle cramps and spasms for the creatine group. Some of the other possible side affects could be stomach cramps, gastrointestinal problems, bloating, dehydration, and in rare circumstances, renal failure. Every effort will be made to minimize these risks by evaluation of preliminary information relating to your health and fitness and constant updates of your health and fitness throughout the experiment.

4) Responsibilities of participant-
Information that you possess about your health status or previous experiences of atypical feelings with physical effort may affect the safety and value of your max lifts. Your prompt reporting of feelings with effort during the max lift itself is also of great importance. You are responsible for fully disclosing such information on your own or when requested by the tester and spotter.

5) Benefits to be expected-
The results to be obtained from this experiment will help to possibly increase the participants muscular strength and further research in the area of creatine and its effects on the human body. Participation in this study will provide subjects with an accurate measurement of maximal strength and a personalized strength program.

6) Inquires-
Any questions about the procedures used or results taken from this experiment are encouraged. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to ask for further explanations.

7) Freedom of consent-
Your permission to perform this experiment is voluntary. You are free to drop out of the experiment at any point, if you so desire.
I have read this form, and I understand the procedures involved in the experiment that I will be performing and the attendant risks and discomforts. Knowing these risks and discomforts, and having been able to ask questions and receiving answers to my satisfaction, I consent to participate in this experiment.

Date ____________________________
Signature of participant

Date ____________________________
Signature of Witness

Date ____________________________
Signature of authorized delegate
Weekly Workouts

**Workout #1 – Chest**

Bench Press  3 sets of 8-12 repetitions (3x8-12)
Incline Press 3 x 8-12
Incline Dumbbell Press 3 x 8-12
Flat Bench Flies 3 x 8-12

**Workout #2 – Legs**

Leg Sled 3 x 8-12
Stiff Legged Deadlift 3 x 8-12
Leg Extension 3 x 8-12
Leg Curl 3 x 8-12

**Workout #3 – Back, Bicep, Tricep, Shoulders**

Lat Pulldown 3 x 10
Straight Bar Bicep curl 3 x 10
Tricep Pushdowns 3 x 10
DB Shoulder Press 3 x 10
# Creatine Supplementation

**Analysis of Ergogenic Value of Creatine Supplementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies Evaluating the Phosphagen System (≤30-s)</th>
<th>Ergogenic Effect</th>
<th>Mean Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isometric Force</td>
<td>4.7 ± 3 (76%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isokinetic Torque</td>
<td>7.8 ± 4 (95%)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isometric Force</td>
<td>9.0 (95%)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling Sprints (8 to 30s)</td>
<td>4.7 ± 3 (76%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Studies</td>
<td>5.1 ± 1 (67%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Jump</td>
<td>5.0 ± 0 (100%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run Sprint Performance</td>
<td>5.0 ± 0 (100%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Sprints</td>
<td>2.5 (25%)</td>
<td>2-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49.7 ± 6 (82%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Creatine Supplementation

### Analysis of Ergogenic Value of Creatine Supplementation

#### Studies Evaluating Anaerobic Endurance (0-150 s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Ergogenic Effect</th>
<th>Mean Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>214 (96%)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle Ergometry</td>
<td>417 (92%)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>415 (94%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>112 (95%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>112 (95%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1222 (86%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


Available online: [http://www.wheelersburgpress.com](http://www.wheelersburgpress.com)
## Creatine Supplementation

**Analysis of Ergogenic Value of Creatine Supplementation**

### Studies Evaluating Aerobic Endurance (60-90s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Ergogenic Effect</th>
<th>Mean Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycle Ergometry</td>
<td>30 (30%)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>30 (30%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>26 (67%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106 (42%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most studies showing ergogenic benefits are in events lasting less than 3 min.*

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APPENDIX G

Written Permission From Dr. Kreider For Charts

Tricia:

I would suggest using the tables in Creatine: The Power Supplement (Human Kinetics). Summaries of these tables are available online at http://www.hmse.memphis.edu/faculty/kreider/index.html (click course/research presentations and the link to SWACSM presentation).

----- Original Message -----  
From: Tricia Cross 
To: kreider.richard@coe.memphis.edu 
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2000 5:27 PM 
Subject: research 

Dr. Kreider, 

Hello, my name is Tricia Cross and I am a graduate student at Eastern Illinois University and I am completing a thesis using creatine. I noticed in your article "Creatine, the Next Ergogenic Supplement?" you have several tables listed that show different outcomes of several studies. These tables would greatly help and support my thesis documenting studies that do show ergogenic effects and studies that don't. I am writing to ask your permission to use your tables in my thesis.

Sincerely,

Tricia Cross