

Eating apples is good for you, ongoing research carried out by The University of Western Australia (UWA) and Edith Cowan University (ECU) has reaffirmed.



The science behind how apples assist human health by improving cardiovascular health was presented this week at Western Australian Horticulture Update by UWA senior research fellow Michael Considine and adjunct research fellow Catherine Bondonno, a postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Medical and Health Sciences at Edith Cowan University.

Considine said the work began about 10 years ago with the aim of trying to validate the health benefits of apples to add value to varieties developed from the Australian National Apple Breeding Program funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

“The research has three parts: to identify the traits of a healthy apple, develop tools to accelerate the breeding program, and use the outcome as a marketing and promotion tool for WA apples,” Considine said.

Bondonno said [apples were high in ‘flavonoids’](#) (antioxidants), which are concentrated in the skin rather than the flesh of apples.

“Apples are particularly high in the flavonoid *quercetin*, however consumption of the whole fruit is necessary to obtain the health benefits,” she said.

“A large number of studies have shown that dietary flavonoids provide many benefits for cardiovascular health. We have screened the flavonoid content of over 100 apples from the national breeding program based in Western Australia, and identified apples that are high in flavonoids, including Pink Lady and Bravo-branded apples.

"Two clinical trials have demonstrated the positive effect of Pink Lady apple consumption on cardiovascular health - one study demonstrated improved blood vessel function within hours of eating apple and the second trial showed these effects are sustained following four weeks of daily intake by people at risk of cardiovascular disease."

Considine, who is intimately involved with the national breeding program, said the original motivation was to demonstrate that apples are a natural 'functional food'.

Research supporting the presentation has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia, the department, UWA, ECU, Pomewest, and Fruit West.