Curcumin Inhibits the Classical and Alternate Pathways of Component Activation

The golden yellow compound curcumin is found in turmeric and is a phenol that has been well studied for its medical benefits. The Division of Medical Virology at the University of Capetown, South Africa judged its ability to decrease the incidence of an inflammatory compound called complement. Curcumin's efficacy was tested comparatively with rosemarinic acid and quercitin. Curcumin inhibited the classical and alternate zymosin pathways that generate complement in a dose dependent manner. It was more effective than rosemarinic acid, but less effective than the bioflavonoid quercitin. 

*Annals of the New York 2005; 1056:100-112.3.*

Huang Lian (Coptis Rhizome) Arrests Cell Growth and Apoptosis in Human Breast Cancer Cells

This study used DNA microarray technology to examine the effect of three cancer cell lines associated with breast cancers. According to the study, “Huang lian extract markedly inhibited their proliferation in a dose and time-dependent manner.” The microarray assay revealed that treatment with huang lian dramatically increased the mRNA expression of interferon-B(IFN-B) and tumor necrosis factor in the MCF-7 cells. IFN-B is one of the most important anticancer cytokines. Upregulation of this gene is in part responsible for its antiproliferative effect. The results present huang lian as a promising herb for chemoprevention and chemotherapy of certain cancers.


Injection No Better than a Placebo at Preventing Influenza in Children

The reviewers questioned whether children between 6 months and 23 months of age should receive the flu shot as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention since 2004. The authors, led by Dr. Sue Smith of Oxford University, say that “national policies for the vaccination of healthy young children are based on very little evidence.” Until recently, flu shots were recommended for seniors over 65 years of age and health-care workers. Studies demonstrate that children under 2 years of age are hospitalized for the flu at the same rate as senior citizens. The CDC reported “more than 150 children under 18 died from complications of flu during the 2003-2004 season.” The reviewers examined 51 studies of influenza vaccines, including 17 papers translated from Russian for the first time. Two hundred and fifty thousand healthy children under 18 years were involved. Two studies of 1000 toddlers indicate that flu shots containing inactivated virus are no more effective than placebo. The reviewers found no evidence for the claims that vaccines prevent deaths from influenza or other serious complications. The authors were shocked to discover only one study of inactivated vaccine in children under 2 years carried out 30 years ago in 35 children.

*Child Health News; 25 Jan 2006.*

Acupuncture for Bell's Palsy

Bell's palsy is an idiopathic acute facial paralysis of the facial nerve resulting in dry eye, facial numbness, dueling, and if severe enough, hearing difficulties. The authors performed a systematic review of published and unpublished trials. Three Chinese studies, which included a total of 288 patients, were selected. Although the number of randomized, controlled studies was insufficient, the author concluded the benefits of acupuncture with and without drugs. They concluded that acupuncture worked best with complementary drug therapy and that acupuncture alone was more effective than drugs alone.

*The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005; Issue 4.*

Stimulation of P6 for Preventing Postoperative Nausea

Twenty-six trials that included 3347 individuals were analyzed with a 95% confidence ratio (CI). A systematic review of the literature supports the use of P 6 stimulation in patients without anti-emetic drug therapy. P 6 acupoint stimulation was found to reduce the risk of nausea, but not vomiting.

*The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005; Issue 4.*

Treating Pregnancy-Related Nausea and Vomiting with Ginger

Various doses of ginger were used to treat women during their first and second trimesters of pregnancy. Ginger was shown to improve the symptoms of nausea and vomiting compared to a placebo. Although the authors do not recommend ginger universally due to the questionable product quality of some commercial supplements, there appears to be low risk with its use and is effective for treatment of nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy.


Garlic Lowers Blood Pressure

Garlic, chili peppers, wasabi, yellow mustard, and many other pungent spices are believed to possess extraordinary medical benefits since the days of Egyptian pharaohs. A recent publication in the journal Current Biology stated that garlic possesses the chemical allicin, which causes the...