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Re: Herbs with Potential Benefit for Lupus

Lauerma, John F. Asian Herbal Therapy for Lupus. *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*, January/February 1996, pp. 16-18.

Systemic lupus erythematosus is an autoimmune disorder, affecting nine women for every one man, in which the patient's T-cells target the body's own tissues instead of attacking only foreign bodies. Lupus patients frequently suffer from debilitating fatigue, yet their condition often goes undiagnosed for long periods of time, or is misdiagnosed as chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia. Currently, steroids and the drugs prednisone and cyclophosphamide are prescribed to alleviate lupus' symptoms, often with dangerous side effects. Consequently, there is a great deal of interest in alternative therapies for lupus.

Sairei-to (Chai-Ling-Tang), a Chinese herbal mixture used for its anti-inflammatory properties, is showing promising results as a substitute for prednisone. Reports suggest that it may be useful for weaning patients off of steroids. Bupleurum, another Chinese herbal mixture of which *Bupleurum falcatum* is a major component, is also being used as an anti-inflammatory. Other anti-inflammatory herbal remedies showing some success in treating lupus include curcumin, an extract of turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), and bromelain, a pineapple enzyme. Used together, bromelain enhances the absorption of curcumin, which is poorly absorbed in the digestive tract. Homeopathic doses of arsenicum, astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*), and osha (*Ligusticum porteri*) have also been helpful in treating lupus, as have acupuncture treatments and other alternative modalities.

Lastly, DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), a naturally occurring hormone found in both men and women, has been the focus of a national, NIH-funded trial for lupus treatment. Researchers hope that DHEA will restore lupus patients' immune systems to full function, perhaps by correcting the cytokine imbalance. The final report of the study should be ready sometime in 1997.

—Ginger Webb

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