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FILE: Dong quai (*Angelica sinensis*)

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RE: **Dong Quai Monograph**

Noé, Jody E. *Angelica Sinensis: a Monograph. Journal of Naturopathic Medicine*, Winter 1997, pp. 66-72.

This overview of *Angelica sinensis* (commonly known as Dong Quai, Dang Gui or Tang Kuei) is organized into discussions of the herb in terms of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) functions, clinical use and pharmacology, and western medicine functions, clinical research and naturopathic clinical applications. The medicinal herb has other demonstrated pharmacological actions in addition to its traditional use as a treatment for dysmenorrhea.

TCM classifies dang gui as a tonifying herb, with sweet, acrid, bitter and warm properties. Depending on its preparation, dang gui is used more or less as a blood tonifier and nourisher and to regulate the reproductive system, particularly in women. As with other tonic herbs, dang gui is inappropriate in cases of acute illness, even a simple cold; rather, it is prescribed for chronic conditions in a manner that, in western terms, strengthens the body and improves nutritional status. Asian women commonly use dang gui to support and maintain normal reproductive function, lessen pelvic congestion and stop pain caused by congealed blood, such as bruises, menstrual clots and even uterine fibroids. This author explains that it is used supportively before, during and after pregnancy.

A significant amount of *in vitro* and *in vivo* research has been conducted in Asian countries with dang gui, most of it with animals; based on the promising results of these animal trials, the author calls for more human studies. Researchers conclude that dang gui's pharmacological actions are partly due to its essential oil content and partly to compounds extractable with hot water; the herb also contains several B vitamins, carotene and vitamin E.

Dang gui research can be divided into uterotonic, vascular, immunoregulatory and anti-tumor, and "other" categories.

Studies indicate that dang gui hot water extract regulates uterine and intestine contractions, relaxes the uterus and even inhibits spasms. Dang gui essential oils have the opposite effect. The herb also lessens "pelvic

congestion,” acts as a mild laxative and stabilizes serum glucose levels, actions that may relieve other symptoms of dysmenorrhea. “*Angelica* has a phytohormonal effect on both estrogen and progesterone fractions, while also showing an effect in aiding the development of the uterus,” says the author. “Development” in the last sentence is not explained.

The author describes dang gui’s actions on the vascular system as “vast;” the herb appears to lower blood pressure, decreasing blood flow, heart beat and pulse rate while exerting a vasodilatory effect. In animal studies the herb apparently decreased or resolved arrhythmias and premature ventricular contractions, and relaxed the myocardium. Other observations include an apparent decrease in atherosclerotic plaque formation increased absorption and utilization of vitamin E and mild analgesic, anti-inflammatory and anesthetic properties.

Dang gui has exhibited apparent bacteriocidal action against *Bacillus dysenteriae* and *Staphylococcus* spp. Dang gui extracts also showed in vitro and in vivo antiviral and antifungal activity. The herb increases lymphocyte activity and production, and murine IL-2 formation, evidence that dang gui is an immuno-modulating agent. The herb’s polysaccharides exhibited potent anti-tumor activity.

Clinical research supports the traditional use of Korean dang gui to treat diabetes. Research on dang gui’s effects on the liver indicate that it may generally increase metabolism. The herb has a mild central nervous system sedative effect. —*Betsy Levy*