

HERBCLIP

FILE: · Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)
· Psoriasis

DATE: May 21, 1997

HC 052172

RE: **Study of Oregon Grape Ointment in Psoriasis Patients**

Wiesenauer, M. and R. Lüdtke. *Mahonia aquifolium* in patients with Psoriasis vulgaris — an intraindividual study. *Phytotherapy*, Vol. 3(3), pp. 231-235.

A double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial was conducted in Germany of the efficacy of *Mahonia aquifolium* in patients with Psoriasis vulgaris. *M. aquifolium* (Oregon grape, family Berberidaceae) is a shrub found on the Pacific coast of North America. It has been used for dermatological diseases in traditional folk medicine, and its phytotherapeutic use has been suggested in medical literature. The active substances in *M. aquifolium* extract are believed to be the alkaloids berberine, berbamine, and oxyacanthine.

Psoriasis vulgaris, a hereditary disease with multiple origins affecting 1-3% of people of European origin, is difficult to treat. The alleviation or elimination of symptoms remains to this day the primary goal of treatment, with the secondary goal being to keep the patient relapse-free for as long as possible. Current therapeutic options are limited, and none offers a safe and practicable long-term therapy.

The trial consisted of an intraindividual comparison of body sides (a standard trial design in dermatology) to assess the efficacy of the verum (an ointment containing 10% *Mahonia* bark extract) and the efficacy of a placebo ointment. A total of 82 patients with clinically diagnosed Psoriasis vulgaris were recruited from 22 family physicians. Each received two tubes of ointment (one placebo, one verum), and were instructed to massage the ointments into their afflicted areas 2-3 times a day and to wear bandages with the ointment at night. Body sides had been randomly allocated to verum or placebo, and the tubes were marked only with either "left" or "right". Therapy length was left up to the individual physicians, but a period of eight weeks was suggested. At the end of therapy, the patients and physicians were each to assess independently the treatments' success using a three-step scale: symptoms unchanged, symptoms improved, symptoms disappeared completely.

More than half of the patients (61.3%) and physicians (63.8%) assessed the Mahonia ointment as “symptoms unchanged.” Nonetheless, the researchers report, “the difference when compared to placebo is obvious and significantly proven in the patients’ assessment.” Psoriasis patients respond differently to all types of psoriasis treatment, the researchers write. While quite a few individuals experienced little or no symptom alleviation with *Mahonia* extract treatment, it is important to note that some individuals in the study experienced good to very good results. Unfortunately, the tables provided in the published study are unclear, and additional figures were not reported in the text of the article.

The researchers note that *Mahonia* seems to alleviate symptoms especially well in moderately severe cases. Adverse side effects were noted in several cases, including “allergic reaction” to the verum, strong itching and burning sensations, and irritation of the skin. “We regard *Mahonia aquifolium* bark extract,” the researchers conclude, “as a potent and safe therapy of moderately severe cases of psoriasis vulgaris.” —*Ginger Webb*

The American Botanical Council (ABC) provides this summary as an educational service. ABC cannot guarantee that the data in the original article is accurate and correct, nor does distribution of the summary constitute any endorsement of the information contained in the original article or of the views of the article’s authors.

Reproduction of the summaries is allowed on a limited basis for students, colleagues, employees and/or customers. Other uses and distribution require prior approval from ABC: telephone: (512) 331-8868; fax: (512) 331-1924. (Refer to Bin #110)