Chinese Herbs Effective for Osteoarthritis

By Editorial Staff

While the majority of research on Chinese medicine treatments for osteoarthritis has focused specifically on acupuncture, a recent study published in the March 2008 issue of Chinese Medicine found that an herbal treatment was effective in reducing symptoms of pain and stiffness and increasing physical functioning.

Jung-Nein Lai and colleagues conducted a study of 68 patients with degenerative osteoarthritis of the knee in order to determine if the herbal mixture Duhuo Jisheng Tang was effective in reducing stiffness and pain and increasing physical functioning. Patients were given 2.5 grams daily and evaluated at two and four weeks after starting treatment.

The herbal formula consisted of: Radix angelicae sinensis (danggui), Radix paeoniae alba (baishao), Radix et rhizoma glycyrrhizae (gancao), Radix rehmanniaef (dihuang), Radix et rhizoma ginseng (renshen), Poria (fuling), Radix angelicae pubescentis (duhuo), Herba taxilli (sangjisheng), Radix gentianae macrophyllae (qinjiao), Radix saposhnikoviae (fangfeng), Radix et rhizoma asari (xixin), Rhizoma chuan-xiong (chuanxiong), Cortex cinnamomi (rougui), Cortex eucommiae (duzhong) and Radix cyathulae (chuanniuxi).

After two weeks, patients reported significant improvement in pain from a mean score of 22.2 to 16.9. Patients also reported less stiffness, with a change from 28.1 to 17.4. There also was an improvement on the visual analog scale (VAS), which asks patients to indicate pain level on a line between "No pain" and "Worst pain." The mean VAS score after two weeks changed from 38.7 to 27.8.

The researchers concluded, "The dosage form and prescription pattern of the DJT preparation described in the current study might be used as a complementary or alternative treatment of pain, stiffness and other physical functioning problems in patients with OA of the knee."

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