



Herb may provide relief for herpes

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University of Greenwich research shows tansy may be used to treat herpes —

Dr Solomon Habtemariam, Greenwich's School of Science, has released the results of a study showing that a folk remedy may be an effective treatment for the sexually transmitted disease herpes .

Tansy, *Tanacetum Vulgare*, is a flowering plant found across mainland Europe and Asia. From the Middle Ages onwards the plant, whose folk names include Golden Buttons and Mugwort, has been used as a remedy for various conditions, from fevers to rheumatism. However, it's supposed medical benefits have always been questioned.

Joint scientific study shows promise

News regarding the curative properties of tansy is the result of a collaboration between research groups led by Dr Habtemariam from the School of Science at the University of Greenwich at Medway and Professor Francisco Parra at the Universidad de Oviedo in Spain, published in *Phytotherapy Research*.

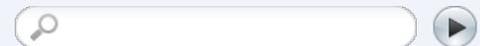
Dr Solomon Habtemariam stated, "We have identified several compounds in the plant with strong antioxidant potential. Antioxidants are important for healing wounds and can be used to treat the skin eruptions and blister-like lesions or cold sores that are the symptoms of herpes. The drugs currently available to treat the disease are becoming less effective as the virus is developing resistance to them. Diseases such as genital herpes are also increasing due to immunosuppressive illnesses such as AIDS.

"Our studies have proved the scientific basis for many traditional medicinal plants. We are now able to identify even more structurally complex natural products and those that are present in plants in minute concentrations with our state-of-the-art analytical facilities. In collaboration with our international partners, we are searching for novel antidiabetic, antimicrobial, anticancer, anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective agents from natural sources."

Genital herpes



Tansy, also known as Mugwort



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Genital herpes is presumed to be caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV) type 1 or 2. Medical researchers say herpes is highly contagious and can be passed to others through intimate sexual contact. The disease is a long-term condition with an average rate of recurrence four or five times in the first two years. Over time the frequency of attacks decreases and the condition becomes less severe. It is a common condition particularly among young adults.

Herbal uses of Tansy

Webmd.com reports: "Tansy is used for digestive tract problems including stomach and intestinal ulcers, certain gallbladder conditions, gas, bloating, stomachache, stomach spasms, and poor appetite. It is also used for painful conditions including migraines, nerve pain (neuralgia), joint pain (rheumatism) and sciatica; and for heart conditions including rapid heartbeat (palpitations) and fluid retention caused by congestive heart failure."

Side effect considerations

Northwestern University's *Medill Reports* states, "Dr. Adriane Fugh-Berman, professor of pharmacology at Georgetown University, said taking tansy orally may cause mouth sores. But there is no specific evidence yet that it is either toxic or safe. No clinical trials have been done in humans, and it is rarely used medicinally in the U.S., according to Fugh-Berman. Though tansy's traditional uses have not been scientifically proven, Tully said she trusts that it is generally safe because of its hundreds of years of use in Europe. 'The western medical system would say that's anecdotal, but that's a lot of clinical face time,' she said. Fugh-Berman and Tully agreed that topical use of the plant should create no problems.

In the long run

It is not clear from the new research whether scientists are considering tansy a cure for herpes or whether tansy merely ameliorates, or treats, herpes.

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