

Herbal Treatment of IBS

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Inflammatory bowel disease or syndrome (IBD or IBS) affects the mucosal lining of the gastrointestinal tract; the etiology is unknown and treatment is directed at systemic immunosuppression. Natural products, including medicinal herbs, have provided approximately half of the drugs developed for clinical use over the past 20 years.

The purpose of our current study was to determine the effects of a novel combination of herbal extracts on intestinal inflammation using a murine model of IBD. Female Swiss-Webster mice were randomized to receive normal water or 5% dextran sulfate sodium (DSS) drinking water to induce colitis. Mice were treated with either a novel combination of herbal aqueous extracts or vehicle control per os (po) or per rectum (pr) every 24 hours for 7-8 days. Disease activity index score (DAI) was determined daily; mice were sacrificed and colons were analyzed by H & E staining, MPO assay, and cytokine (TNF-alpha, IL-6) ELISAs.

Mice treated with the combination of herbal extracts, either po or pr, had significantly less rectal bleeding and lower DAI scores compared to the vehicle-treated group. Moreover, colonic ulceration, leukocytic infiltration, and cytokine levels (TNF-alpha and IL-6) were also decreased in the colons of herbal-treated mice, reflected by H & E staining, MPO assay, and cytokine ELISA. Treatment with the combination of medicinal herbs decreases leukocyte infiltration and mucosal ulceration, ameliorating the course of acute colonic inflammation. This herbal remedy may prove to be a novel and safe therapeutic alternative in the treatment of IBD.

Am J Chin Med. 2008;36(5):953-65. Jackson LN, Zhou Y, Qiu S, Wang Q, Evers BM.