

ISSN 1465-3753



Volume 6 • Issue 1 • March 2001

FACT

Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies

An evidence-based approach

PP
Pharmaceutical Press



Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies

Editor-in-Chief

Edzard Ernst
*Laing Chair in Complementary Medicine,
University of Exeter*

US Editor

Brian Berman
*Complementary Medicine Program
University of Maryland*

Managing Editor

Barbara Wider
University of Exeter

Associate Editors

Adrian R White, *University of Exeter*
Max H Pittler, *University of Exeter*
Clare Stevinson, *University of Exeter*
Alyson L Huntley, *University of Exeter*
Linda Long, *University of Exeter*

International Editorial Board

Pim Assendelft, *Amsterdam, The Netherlands*
John Astin, *Baltimore, USA*
Jo Barnes, *London, UK*
David Baxter, *Newtonabbey, UK*
Alan Bensoussan, *Sydney, Australia*
Brian Berman, *Baltimore, USA*
Allan Best, *Vancouver, Canada*
Heather Boon, *Toronto, Canada*
Thurstan Brewin, *Oxford, UK*
Barrie R Cassileth, *New York, USA*
Sigrun Chrubasik, *Freiburg, Germany*
T Mike Cummings, *London, UK*
Mark Donohoe, *Sydney, Australia*
David Eisenberg, *Boston, USA*
Peter Fisher, *London, UK*
Vinjar Fønnebo, *Tromsø, Norway*
Adriane Fugh-Berman, *Washington, USA*
Adrian Furnham, *London, UK*
Harley Goldberg, *Oakland, USA*
Katherine Gundling, *Sacramento, USA*
Elaine Harkness, *Edinburgh, UK*

Anna Hart, *Preston, UK*
Wayne Jonas, *Bethesda, USA*
Ted Kaptchuk, *Boston, USA*
Jos Kleijnen, *York, UK*
Karin Kraft, *Bonn, Germany*
Dana J Lawrence, *Lombard, USA*
Klaus Linde, *Munich, Germany*
Dieter Melchart, *Munich, Germany*
Dónal O'Mathúna, *Columbus, USA*
Kenneth R Pelletier, *Stanford, USA*
Karl-Ludwig Resch, *Bad Elster, Germany*
Basil D Roufogalis, *Sydney, Australia*
Debbie Shaw, *London, UK*
Stephen Sagar, *Hamilton, Canada*
Michael Smith, *Toronto, Canada*
Gerben ter Riet, *York, UK*
Maurits van Tulder, *Amsterdam, The Netherlands*
Marja Verhoef, *Calgary, Canada*
Sunita Vohra, *Toronto, Canada*
Harald Walach, *Freiburg, Germany*
Hitoshi Yamashita, *Tsukuba, Japan*

Published by the Pharmaceutical Press

1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, UK

© 2001 Pharmaceutical Press

ISSN 1465-3753

Editorial office

Department of Complementary Medicine, University of Exeter,
25 Victoria Park Road, Exeter EX2 4NT, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)1392 424 872;

Fax: +44 (0)1392 424 989;

E-mail: fact@exeter.ac.uk www.ex.ac.uk/FACT/

Subscriptions

Annual subscription (2001) to *Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies* (4 issues: March, June, September and December): *Individual*: UK £55; USA and Japan \$105 (+\$13 priority surcharge); rest of world £65 (+£9.00 priority surcharge). *Institutions*: UK £100; USA and Japan \$190 (+\$14.50 priority surcharge); rest of world £115 (+£8.00 priority surcharge). Single issues: UK £28.00; USA and Japan \$47; rest of world £30.

Orders

All orders to: Pharmaceutical Press, PO Box 151, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 8QU, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)1491 829 272; Fax: +44 (0)1491 829 292;

E-mail: rpsgb@cabi.org www.pharmpress.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the copyright holder.

The publisher makes no representation, express or implied, with regard to the currency or accuracy of the information contained in this publication and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies that may be made. Inclusion of any product does not imply its use is either advocated or rejected. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, editor or editorial board. Appearance of an advertisement in this publication does not constitute endorsement of the quality or value of the product or the claims made for it.

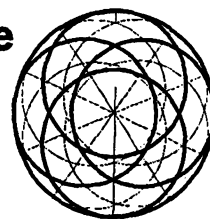
Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by the Pharmaceutical Press for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Centre (CCC) Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the base fee of \$15 per article is paid directly to CCC, 21 Congress Street, Salem, MA 01970, USA.

Text and cover design: Barker/Hilsdon

Typeset and printed by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies

Volume 6 • Issue 1 • March 2001



Contents

EDITORIAL

- Opinion versus evidence: creative tension or uneasy coexistence? 1

FOCUS 3

- Complementary therapies for chronic venous insufficiency
Max H Pittler

SUMMARIES AND COMMENTARIES 7

Acupuncture

- Acupuncture is an effective treatment for cocaine dependence 7
- Acupuncture improves back pain in pregnancy 8
- Acupuncture reactions are common but mild 9

Herbal Medicine

- Ayurvedic medicine reduces joint swelling in patients with rheumatoid arthritis 10
- Ispaghula husk may have adverse effects on colorectal cancer 11
- Herbal brain tonic may reduce doctors' stress 12
- Encouraging findings for artichoke extract in the treatment of hyperlipoproteinaemia 13
- Monitoring of adverse effects of herbal medicines 14
- *Petasites* extract effective for short-term migraine prophylaxis 15
- Ginkgo extract increases speed of attention in healthy subjects 16
- Echinacea tea may have therapeutic effects on upper respiratory tract symptoms 17
- Willow bark alleviates back pain 18
- Encouraging findings for French maritime pine bark extract in chronic venous insufficiency 19
- Effects of hypericum on depression are similar to imipramine 20

Homoeopathy

- Isopathic prophylaxis of birch pollen allergy is not helpful 21
- Isopathic treatment for birch pollen allergy is of questionable efficacy 22
- A questionably positive effect of a homoeopathic complex medication in female infertility 22
- Is homoeopathy a placebo? Evidence to suggest not 24

Manipulative Therapies

- Hypoalgesic effects of spinal manipulation not yet confirmed 25

Vitamins, Minerals, Supplements and Dietary Approaches

- Promising evidence for dextrose prolotherapy in the treatment of hand osteoarthritis 26

Other Complementary Therapies

- Preliminary results suggest that yoga can alleviate depression 27
- Which conditions benefit from aromatherapy? 28
- Massage may help some premenstrual symptoms 29
- Massage therapy is effective for subacute low-back pain 30
- Massage may improve quality of life of AIDS patients 31

SHORT REPORTS 33

BOOK REVIEWS 45

NEW BOOKS 51

RECENT LITERATURE 53

EVENTS CALENDAR 65

NEWS 67

ABSTRACTS 69

- 7th Annual Symposium on Complementary Health Care *7th–9th December 2001, Exeter, UK*

Does a single dose of a homoeopathic ultramolecular dilution of Thyroidinum 30CH affect the decrease of body weight of fasting patients after stagnation of weight loss? A randomised placebo-controlled double-blind GCP-conforming clinical trial

Schmidt J M, Ostermayr B

Krankenhaus für Naturheilweisen, Sanatoriumsplatz 2, D-81545 Munich, Germany

Objectives

During fasting, the daily decrease of body weight is partly counteracted by a low triiodothyronine (T3) plasma level and a corresponding reduction of protein and fat catabolism – an adaptation that can be overcome by T3 treatment. This study investigates whether an ultramolecular dilution of thyroid hormone (Thyroidinum 30CH) affects the course of body weight of fasting patients who had encountered a stagnation of weight loss, suggesting an underlying state of hypothyroidism.

Materials and methods

Fasting patients encountering a stagnation of weight received either a single oral dose (five globules) of Thyroidinum 30CH or placebo on the same day. Body weight and subjective complaints were measured daily, blood samples were taken on three successive days. Study medication was administered to 208 patients (intention to treat); 14 patients showed minor violations of the protocol and there were no dropouts. Primary outcome parameter was the decrease of body weight 2 days after

medication; secondary outcome parameters were the course of 34 laboratory findings and 15 complaints during the following 2–3 days.

Results

The decrease of body weight 2 days after medication was significantly ($P < 0.05$) lower in the Thyroidinum group (347 ± 304 g, $n = 102$) than in the placebo group (439 ± 313 g, $n = 106$). No striking significant differences were found in the laboratory findings and complaints.

Conclusion

The results suggest that clinical effects of ultramolecular doses may be demonstrated by means of objective parameters. Unlike substantial doses, an ultramolecular dose of thyroid hormone seems to reduce the decrease of body weight of fasting patients 2 days after administration. An assumed collateral aggravation of the state of hypothyroidism, however, cannot be supported by plasma levels of thyroid hormone, which did not differ significantly between the two groups.
