

# NONPRESCRIPTION MEDICINES DIGEST



December 4, 2001

Welcome to the second issue of *Nonprescription Medicines Digest*. This month, we feature research on the relationship between exercise and osteoarthritis, the hyperforin and hypericin contents of St. John's wort products, homeopathic treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, and more. Visit our newly renovated website at [www.nmafaculty.org](http://www.nmafaculty.org) for more research and information about developments in the world of nonprescription medicine.



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## Exercise Helps Osteoarthritis

### Archives of Internal Medicine

#### Context

Researchers recently conducted a study examining the relationship between a regimen of regular exercise and the ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL) in adults with osteoarthritis. The study was designed to measure the correlation between regular physical activity and the capacity to engage in everyday activities such as eating, dressing, and bathing.

#### Study Design

The researchers divided 250 people, aged 60 and over who experienced knee osteoarthritis, into three groups. The first group walked three times a week for forty minutes. After three months of supervised participation in the program, group members continued on their own for another fifteen months. A second group participated in a regimen of nine weight-bearing exercises. Members of this group also continued to exercise on their own after three months of supervision. The third group, used as a control, did not exercise but received information about managing arthritis on a monthly basis.

#### Results

After fifteen months, researchers measured the level of ADL disability in each group. Results showed that exercise greatly reduced ADL disability. In the groups that

exercised, the level of ADL disability was 37.1 %; in the group that did not exercise, the level of ADL disability was 52.5%. Furthermore, the level of ADL disability was lowest for those who exercised most consistently for the duration of the study.

### **Conclusion**

The researchers note that the need to prevent disability and dependency in older adults is "urgent"; this study points to one effective method to accomplish that goal.

**Pennix BW, Mesier SP, Rejeski WJ, et al. *Arch Internal Med* 2001;161(19):2309-2316.**

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## **Homeopathy and Rheumatoid Arthritis**

### **Rheumatology**

#### **Context**

A recent study conducted by British researchers counters the belief that homeopathic remedies are effective in the treatment of symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, including pain and joint inflammation.

#### **Study Design**

The 58 rheumatoid arthritis patients who participated in the study had drug histories that included NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) or anti-rheumatic drugs that may or may not have had NSAIDs. The patients were divided into two groups. The first received a treatment made up of 42 homeopathic elements, while the second group received a placebo.

#### **Results**

After three months, results showed much lower pain levels for the placebo group than for the group treated with the homeopathic remedy. The results were consistent for the patients previously treated with NSAIDs and those who were treated with anti-rheumatic drugs.

#### **Conclusion**

The researchers have not been able to determine a specific reason for the results with the placebo group. However, their concern lies more with determining the genuine efficacy of homeopathic remedies to control the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

**Fisher P, Scott DL. *Rheum* 2001;40(9):1052-1055.**

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## **Comparison of German St. John's Wort Products**

# According to Hyperforin and Total Hypericin Content

## Context

German researchers compared the hyperforin and hypericin content of currently available St. John's wort products to determine their batch-to-batch reproducibility.

## Study Design

Representative products were obtained from the manufacturer or purchased from pharmacies in and around Frankfurt, Germany. For five batches from each of the eight manufacturers, 10 individual dosage forms (tablets or capsules) were analyzed for both hyperforin and hypericin content.

Hyperforin concentrations were analyzed by high-performance liquid chromatography. Total hypericin concentrations were determined by polarography, an electrochemical method. Concentrations were compared among different batches of the same product and among products from different manufacturers.

## Results

The products contained widely differing amounts of hypericin and hyperforin, even after correcting for differences in the amount of extract per dose. Some products demonstrated consistent concentrations of hyperforin and hypericin from batch to batch; others exhibited pronounced interbatch variability.

## Conclusion

Pharmacists should take this variability into account when counseling patients on the use of St. John's wort products.

**Wurglics M, Westerhoff K, Kaunzinger A, et al. *J Am Pharm Assoc* 2001;41 (4):560-566.**

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