Women's Health Update

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Some of My Favorite Natural Medicine Research of Late

Lavender and Anxiety

My newest addition to options in managing anxiety this past year of 2012 has been the newly available lavender oil distillation from Germany. Several clinical studies have demonstrated the benefit of lavender extracts compared with study drug or placebo, in decreasing anxiety and depression. Orally administered lavender capsules were tested in one randomized double-blind, placebo-controlled trial.[1] The authors concluded that lavender had anxiolytic effects under conditions of low anxiety, but were unable to draw conclusions about high anxiety or clinical anxiety disorders. Another study of lavender oil for anxiety disorder was done comparing it with placebo. This was the first double-blind randomized clinical trial to document the anxiolytic efficacy of oral lavender essential oil for anxiety disorder.[2] Researchers concluded that the lavender oil was both efficacious and safe and not only had a significant effect on reducing anxiety symptoms on several anxiety scales, but also improved the quality and duration of sleep and general mental and physical health without sedation or druglike side effects. A multicenter, randomized trial was done comparing lavender oil with low-dose lorazepam in patients with generalized anxiety disorder.[3] The results demonstrated that the lavender oil capsules was comparable in results to the conventional study drug with the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale score decreasing by 45% in the lavender group and by 46% in the drug group. By the end of the six-week trial, it was a 40% decrease in the lavender group and 27% in the drug group. In addition, the response rate was 52.5% in the lavender oil group vs. only 40.5% with the conventional treatment. Lavender oil capsules can elicit a lavender eructation, nausea, and dyspepsia in 2.6% to 5.2% of patients.

Green Tea and Influenza

A timely topic for the upcoming flu season is the use of green tea in reducing the incidence of influenza. About 200 health-care workers in three different facilities in Japan were randomized to receive either capsules that contained 378 mg/day of catechins and 210 mg/day of theanine, both constituents found in green tea, or placebo.[4]

Of these eligible health-care workers, 98 received the green tea and 99 received the placebo. The incidence of clinical signs and symptoms of influenza infection was significant lower in the green tea (4.1%) group compared with the placebo group (13.1%).

The catechins and theanine in green have shown previous promise as a strategy for preventing influenza infections. In the laboratory, experiments have shown that green tea catechins can prevent influenza infection. A small study was then done which reported that gargling with tea catechins extracts was effective in preventing influenza infection in the elderly individuals in nursing homes. Green tea extracts have also been shown to enhance systemic immunity and prevent upper respiratory infections and influenza symptoms in adults. Based on this preliminary research, the more substantial randomized, double-blind study was done on the effectiveness of green tea catechins and theanine in preventing influenza infections. This is an extremely useful, simple, safe method of reducing the incidence of influenza. I will be advising my patients to take a standardized extract of green tea capsule regularly and/or drink green tea liberally, especially during flu season.

Boric Acid and Candida Vaginitis

While I've been prescribing vaginally delivered boric acid suppositories for acute and chronic candida vaginitis for the full duration of my last 28 years of clinical practice, new research continues to impress.

Fourteen studies, including 2 randomized clinical trials, 9 case series, and 4 case reports were included in this review of the clinical evidence utilizing intravaginal boric acid for vulvovaginal candidiasis.[5] Boric acid was compared with nystatin, terconazole, flucytosine, itraconazole, clotrimazole, ketoconazole, fluconazole, buconazole, and

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