

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Moving Along With Chinese Herbal Medicine

Professor Alan Bensoussan from the Centre for Complementary Medicine Research and Associate Professor John Kellow from the Gastrointestinal Investigation Unit of the Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney University are evaluating the effectiveness of Chinese herbal medicine in treating constipation-predominant irritable bowel syndrome (C-IBS). This research is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

'C-IBS is the most common chronic medical disorder of the gastrointestinal tract, with 10% of the Australian population suffering its effects,' says Professor Bensoussan. 'It is poorly addressed by current conventional pharmaceutical and medical treatments, with no single drug having a significant long-term effect on what is a complex problem. People with C-IBS suffer symptoms such as changed bowel habits including stool consistency and frequency, abdominal bloating and pain, as well as anxiety and/or depression. They may also feel chronically stressed. The results of these symptoms and conditions are work absenteeism, reduced productivity and restricted social participation. This increases health care costs leading to a financial burden on employers and the community.'

To test the usefulness of Chinese herbal medicine, a double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial will take place over eight weeks. Participants screened for the trial with a diagnosis of C-IBS will be recruited from hospitals, clinics, via gastroenterologist and GP referrals. A chemically-standardised, multi-component Chinese herbal medicine consisting of seven herbs will be used in the trial. This will facilitate replication and validation in studies by other researchers. Physiological measurements



will be taken to assess the response of the lower bowel to treatment and a psychosocial assessment of participants carried out to determine changes to their quality of life during treatment.

Chinese herbal medicines show promise in being a substantial treatment for C-IBS because of their range of physiological effects on both bowel function and the central nervous system. This will produce not only benefits for sufferers but also help to reduce work absenteeism, increase productivity, reducing health care costs for the Australian community.

Project Title: Clinical and physiological evaluation of Chinese herbal medicine for constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome
Funding has been set at: \$590,200
Contact Details: a.bensoussan@uws.edu.au
<http://www.uws.edu.au/complemed>
June 2009