

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

St. John's Wort – *Hypericum perforatum* – Part II



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Medicinal Qualities

St. John's Wort (SJW) focuses on 4 main areas: Anti-depressant, antiviral properties, antibiotic properties, and increased wound healing.

There have been many studies on these various areas yet newsletter space is very limited so I will just report the main findings.

Anti-depressant - Depression affects about 1 in 4 people during their lifetime. Medical doctors often prescribe antidepressants indiscriminately. Often people with fatigue and burnout can be classified as depressed. A person with a poor diet, with excess sugar and caffeine and a sedentary life style can be classified. Hormonal changes that precede menopause as well as conditions such as hypoglycemia, candida infection, food or environmental sensitivities and thyroid or adrenal dysfunction are often overlooked. Chronic constipation often is the only problem. Doctors don't dig for causes so many are misdiagnosed.

The current most popular understanding of clinical depression is that it results from an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain, ie norepinephrine (nor-ep-ih-NEF-rin), serotonin (ser-oh-TOE-nin) and dopamine (DOE-puh-mene) which help regulate the mood. If they are imbalanced most likely this will be the cause of depression.

SJW works like a MAOI -monoamine oxidase inhibitor - this prevents the enzymes monoamine oxidase from breaking down neurotransmitters in the brain. As a result, these levels remain high in the brain, boosting mood. When serotonin levels drop in the brain the person may feel emotionally unstable, overly sensitive and become irritable, anxious and depressed. Serotonin is the brain's messenger that carries information about feelings and mood.

SJW boosts the immune and endocrine systems which makes it an even more powerful antidepressant. Studies have shown that there is a link between how we feel emotionally and how well our immune system is functioning. A depressed person's immune system generally doesn't function well partly due to the overproduction of interleukins, an immune system messenger (communicator between cells). SJW decreases the production of interleukins. It calms an overactive immune system bringing back into balance and the symptoms clear up.

SJW acts on the brain and nervous system, boosts the immune system and also relieves the physical symptoms associated with depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) winter blues.

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Anti-Viral properties - Hypericin and Pseudohypericin have been shown in clinical trials to have antiviral effects on Herpes simplex I and II, Influenza, and rabies virus. There tends to be blocking processes of the virus within a body cell and/or they may directly inactivate the maturing virus cells.

Because of these compounds, SJW extract is being tested in HIV treatment. SJW is taken in large doses so that the blood is saturated with hypericin and then begins to infiltrate other tissue. To activate the hypericin after it enters the body tissues requires sunlight. It is believed that the retrovirus will begin to diminish in the HIV infected blood.

Other - Effective in middle to old age sleep disorders such as insomnia, intermittent and akin, sleep duration and just over all poor quality of sleep.

A promising use of SJW is in the area of cancers and tumors due to its outstanding ability to work at the cellular level against destructive invaders like virus and bacteria as well as against cancerous cells and tumors of varying kinds. Hypericin has tumor targeting qualities in combating cancerous cells.

Externally SJW is specific for disease directly affecting the spine. It is applied as a fomentation or oil for sciatica, back spasms, cystic fibrosis, neuralgia and rheumatic pains, it will relieve the pain and inflammation of bruises, varicose vein and mild burns. When there is muscle or nerve pain that is distinct from joint or tissue inflammation, myalgia and neuralgia.

SJW actually rejuvenates the skin and activates the skin's metabolism. The tea applied as a compress to invigorate the skin especially if it is oily and blemished.

Next week we will discuss dosage and usage as well as contra-indications of St. John's Wort.

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