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The IPS Report
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NAURAL HERBS FOR THE INTRACTABLE PAIN SYNDROME SHOULD YOU TAKE THEM?

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The Intractable Pain Syndrome (IPS) is defined as constant pain with cardiovascular, metabolic, and hormonal complications. IPS is caused by neuroinflammation inside the brain and spinal cord (or CNS for central nervous system) that comes from excess electromagnetic energy generated by a painful disease or injury. Specifically, excess electromagnetic energy activates an immune cell in the CNS called "microglia" to produce inflammation that then destroys tissue in the CNS.[1,2] Unfortunately, tissue destroyed by inflammation impairs or damages the normal CNS mechanisms that shut off or cause pain to cease.[3] A person may, therefore, develop constant (24/7) pain that overstresses the cardiovascular, metabolic, and hormonal systems. Tissue destruction in the CNS is well documented by brain scans.[3] This relatively recent understanding of how neuroinflammation destroys CNS tissues and cause constant pain is arguably the most important discovery for pain treatment in the 21st Century. Why? We now have some ideas on how to treat IPS that can possibly cure or at least permanently reduce pain rather than just provide temporary, symptomatic relief.

NECESSITY TO TREAT CNS INFLAMMATION

When someone develops IPS, it is human nature to seek immediate pain relief and ignore its basic cause. If you have constant (24/7) pain, however, one must accept the fact that you have inflammation in the CNS that must be suppressed. Otherwise, you can reasonably assume that the pain will get worse. While research has documented that CNS inflammation may spread, it is unknown whether it ever "burns out." As of yet, there is no blood or x-ray test to know if "burn out" may occur. This means that every person with IPS must take one or more anti-inflammatory agents in an effort to stop further tissue destruction and the worsening of pain.

A PROBLEM WITH TREATMENT

A problem when suppressing inflammation in the CNS is that only a few of the anti-inflammatory agents which are commercially available cross the blood brain barrier and enter the spinal fluid in sufficient amounts to be effective. This includes the non-specific anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) and corticosteroids. Interestingly, natural products including botanicals, herbs, enzymes, and hormones tend to cross the blood brain barrier and provide anti-inflammatory activity. A well-known common example is aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) derived from tree bark. This situation has caused a great deal of interest in the use of natural products for suppression of CNS inflammation.[4] Several research studies in both laboratory tests and animals have found that some natural agents do indeed suppress CNS inflammation. This report is pleased to provide this information.

NATURAL HERBAL PRODUCTS

To date, research has identified these natural herbs that suppress CNS inflammation:

1. Ginseng
2. Curcumin
3. Resveratrol
4. Ginger
5. Fisetin

There are likely other natural products that suppress CNS inflammation, but this list is a good start.

LIMITED GUIDANCE

Currently, there are very few controlled (blind) studies in humans to demonstrate the effectiveness of natural products. The author of this report believes he has often seen considerable effectiveness of natural products in reducing the pain of IPS. Other anecdotal reports from patients and doctors are starting to accumulate. Precise dosages are unknown, but the manufacturer of each product will have some starting instructions on the label. Herbal agents appear quite safe and have few reported side effects. Herbs can be taken with corticosteroids, opioids, naltrexone, electrical stimulators, neuropathic agents, and essentially all medication used for treatment of IPS.

BENEFITS

At this time, we believe there is enough research and clinical experience to recommend both herbal, non-prescription as well as prescription anti-inflammatory agents to assist treatment of IPS. The time has come to treat IPS with a broader-based approach than just the use of symptomatic pain relievers. Based on our current knowledge, IPS will likely get worse unless a person's treatment program includes agents that suppress CNS inflammation.

REFERENCES

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