

TCM agent shows promise in post-stroke recovery, says study

Richard Philip

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) could hold the answer to post-stroke recovery.

A new study published in the journal *Stroke* found that the TCM, Danqi Piantang Jiaonang (DJ), was well-tolerated and was more efficacious in improving the recovery of post-stroke sufferers than Buchang Naoxintong Jiaonang (BNJ), the comparator TCM.

"Despite improvements in acute stroke treatment, many patients only make a partial or poor recovery. Therefore, there is a need for treatments that would further improve outcome," wrote the study's authors, which included Dr. Christopher Chen from the department of pharmacology at the National University of Singapore, Singapore and colleagues.

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Chen and his team pooled and re-analyzed results from two previously unpublished randomized controlled trials conducted in China in 1999 and 2000, which compared DJ and BNJ in patients who had recent ischemic stroke, defined as an attack from 10 days to 6 months ago. A total of 605 patients aged between 18 and 70 years were involved in both trials. To be included in the trials, subjects had to fulfill Western diagnostic criteria for stroke, TCM stipulations for apoplexy diagnosis and have a Diagnostic Therapeutic Effects of Apoplexy (DTER) score of less than or equal to 10.

Results from the pooled analysis showed that patients who received DJ had a higher chance of showing functional improvement at 1 month of treatment (relative risk, 2.4; 95% CI, 1.28 to 4.51; $P=0.007$). There were only two cases of nausea and vomiting and no major adverse effects with the use of DJ. [*Stroke* 2009;40:859-863]

"We are very happy to see this data published in *Stroke*. It is a strong validation of the quality of our research," said Mr. David Picard, CEO of the Singapore-based pharmaceutical company that markets DJ internationally. The product is marketed as Neuroaid™.

He pointed out that quality trials of TCM could address the needs that Western medicine has failed to meet. DJ, he said, addresses the gap in stroke treatment and is an answer to the unmet medical needs

of patients and physicians.

The authors noted that the results, though promising, were not enough to make an "evidence-based medicine recommendation to change current prescribing or treatment practice." This was because there were certain methodological weaknesses in the two trials. The short treatment period

and the use of outcome measures different from those that are used in international stroke studies were some of the trials' weak points cited by the authors.

"It is vital more efforts are made to identify promising treatments from traditional medicine in a scientifically credible format," the authors commented.

In line with their call, an ongoing trial known as The Chinese Medicine Neuroaid™ Efficacy on Stroke Recovery (CHIMES) is investigating whether DJ is better than placebo in improving functional outcome of stroke patients if given within 48 hours of stroke onset. This trial is expected to be completed in 2010. **MI**



Traditional Chinese medicine may fill a gap in stroke treatment.

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