

Herbal medicines could treat gastrointestinal disease

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Herbal medicines could benefit patients suffering from gastrointestinal (GI) motility disorders that cannot be treated using conventional drug therapy. In a study published in *Neurogastroenterology and Motility*, researchers reviewed data on Japanese herbal medicines and found them to be effective in reducing the symptoms of GI disorders such as functional dyspepsia, constipation, and postoperative ileus.

"Japanese [herbal medicines](#) have been used in East Asia for thousands of years," says lead researcher Hidekazu Suzuki, Associate Professor at the Keio University School of Medicine. "Our review of the world medical literature reveals that herbal medicines serve a valuable role in the management of patients with functional gastrointestinal disorders."

Many of the drugs used to treat GI motility disorders are ineffective or cause unwanted side effects and, in some cases, this has led to drugs being withdrawn from the market. Herbal medicine is an attractive alternative.

The researchers reviewed data from studies looking at the effect of several different Japanese herbal medicines including the use of Rikkunshi-to, Dai-Kenchu-to, and other herbal medicines. Rikkunshi-to, which is prepared from eight crude herbs, was effective in reducing discomfort caused by functional dyspepsia. Dai-Kenchu-to, a mixture of ginseng, ginger, and zanthoxylum fruit, was beneficial for constipation in children and patients suffering from post-operative ileus - disruption of normal bowel movements following an operation. Another herbal medicine, hangeshashin-to, reduced the severity and frequency of diarrhoea caused by anti-cancer drugs.

In Japan, herbal medicine is manufactured in standardised form with regards to quality and quantity of ingredients. The researchers say the health benefits of standardised formulations of

herbal medicines require more rigorous examination, particularly in the Western world.

"There is a mandate to provide accurate data regarding the effectiveness of non-traditional therapy, not only to our patients but also to healthcare providers who face the dilemma of recommending or opposing management strategies that incorporate herbal medicine," says Suzuki.

Source: Wiley ([news](#) : [web](#))

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