

# NIMH STUDY DAY

-Manchester, Nov 2003 - -

## PSYCHOTROPIC PLANTS IN DEPRESSION, ANXIETY & INSOMNIA.

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### SESSION 1

CONDITIONS & DIAGNOSES  
PSYCHOTROPIC PHYTOCHEMICALS  
ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE BASE

## ICD - 10 Chapter V. 1996

### Depressive Disorders

#### Target signs

low or sad mood  
loss of interest or pleasure  
fatigue or loss of energy

#### Associated symptoms

disturbed sleep  
feelings of guilt  
reduced self-esteem  
poor concentration  
disturbed appetite  
decreased libido  
suicidal thoughts or acts  
agitation or slowing of  
movements or speech  
weight loss

Symptoms of anxiety or nervousness are also frequently present.

### Severity of Depression (ICD-10)

|                             |                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mild depressive episode     | mild first manifestation or mild recurrence of 2 target and 2 associated symptoms. |
| Moderate depressive episode | 2-3 target signs plus 3-4 associated symptoms.                                     |
| Major depressive episode    | all target signs plus 4 associated symptoms - some particularly pronounced.        |

### DSM IV. Major Depressive Episode

- A. Five or more symptoms within 2 weeks .
1. Depressed mood.
  2. Loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities.
  3. Significant weight changes - loss or gain.
  4. Insomnia or hypersomnia daily.
  5. Agitation.
  6. Fatigue or loss of energy daily.
  7. Feelings of worthlessness or guilt.
  8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate.
  9. Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation or attempt.

C. Clinically significant distress or impairment.

D. Symptoms not due to drug use.

E. Symptoms not accounted for by bereavement.

### Hamilton Depression Scale

| Item     | Score        | Symptom                  |
|----------|--------------|--------------------------|
| 1        | 0-4          | depressed mood           |
| 2        | 0-4          | guilt                    |
| 3        | 0-4          | suicide                  |
| 4        | 0-2          | insomnia initial         |
| 5        | 0-2          | insomnia middle          |
| 6        | 0-2          | insomnia delayed         |
| 7        | 0-4          | work and interests       |
| 8        | 0-4          | retardation (apathy)     |
| 9        | 0-2          | agitation                |
| 10       | 0-4          | anxiety psychic          |
| 11       | 0-4          | anxiety somatic          |
| 12       | 0-2          | GIT symptoms             |
| 13       | 0-2          | general somatic symptoms |
| 14       | 0-2          | genital symptoms         |
| 15       | 0-4          | hypochondria             |
| 16       | 0-2          | loss of insight          |
| 17       | 0-2          | loss of weight           |
| Grading: | 0 absent     |                          |
|          | 1 mild       | 0 absent                 |
|          | 2+3 moderate | 1 slight                 |
|          | 4 severe     | 2 clearly present        |

### Minor Depression

#### Symptoms

depressed mood  
reduced interest or pleasure plus 2-4 of the following  
(MDE requires 5 or more)  
significant weight change  
appetite change  
disturbed sleep  
noticeable agitation or slowness  
fatigue or loss of energy  
inappropriate feelings of worthlessness or guilt  
reduced concentration  
indecisiveness  
recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

## Anxiety Disorders

1. Panic disorder (and agoraphobia).
2. Specific phobia.
3. Social phobia.
4. Obsessive-compulsive disorder.
5. Post-traumatic stress disorder.
6. Acute stress disorder.
7. Generalised anxiety disorder.
8. Anxiety disorder of medical origin.
9. Substance-induced anxiety disorder.
10. Anxiety disorder (not otherwise specified).

## DSM IV. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- A. Excessive anxiety and worry on most days for at least 6 months.
- B. Difficult to control worry.
- C. Anxiety and worry associated with 3 or more symptoms.
  1. Restlessness or feeling keyed up.
  2. Easily fatigued.
  3. Difficulty concentrating/mind going blank.
  4. Irritability.
  5. Muscle tension.
  6. Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- E. Symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment.
- F. Not due to drugs or medical condition - hyperthyroidism.

## Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale

|              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Anxious mood | Depressed mood        |
| Tension      | Somatic (muscular)    |
| Fears        | Cardiovascular system |
| Insomnia     | Respiratory system    |
| Intellect    | Gastrointestinal      |
| Behaviour    | Genitourinary         |
|              | Autonomic system      |

|         |   |   |                        |
|---------|---|---|------------------------|
| Grades: | 0 | - | none                   |
|         | 1 | - | mild                   |
|         | 2 | - | moderate               |
|         | 3 | - | severe                 |
|         | 4 | - | very severe, disabling |

## DSM IV. Dyssomnias

Primary Insomnia.

- A. Primary complaint is difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep for one month.
- B. Sleep disturbance/daytime fatigue causes clinically significant distress or impairment.
- C. Not related to another mental disorder e.g. MDE/GAD.
- D. Not due to a drug/medicine.

Diagnostic and Statistical  
Manual of Mental Disorders, IV Edition  
American Psychiatric Assoc. 1994.

## Insomnia

Inability to obtain adequate amount of restful sleep due to anxiety.

- Problems in falling asleep. (sleep latency)
- Frequent waking
- Difficulty going back to sleep.
- Early morning waking.
- Total sleep time less than 6 hours.

## Psychoactive Phytochemicals

- Nitrogenous - Alkaloids: Reserpine
- Monoterpenes - essential oils
- Sesquiterpenes - Valepotriates
- Oxygen-containing
- Alpha - pyrones : Kavapyrones
- Gamma- pyrones : Flavanoids
- Lignans - Valerian

## Testing for sedative/anxiolytic activity

- Locomotor activity.
- Locomotor coordination.
- Prolongation of sleeping time.
- Receptor binding studies.
- Brain glucose measurements.
- EEG investigations.
- Elevated plus maze test (anxiolytic effects).
- Sleep questionnaires.
- Activity meters.

*Handwritten note:* 20 of 2018

Information on the class of evidence should be given in accordance with the Draft Comments to Consider on the Evidence of Safety and Efficacy of V. Jil-established Herbal Medicinal Products in Bibliographic Applications (EME A/HMT WG/23/99) which provides the following details:

| <u>Level</u> | <u>Type of evidence</u>                                                                                                                              |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ia           | Evidence obtained from meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials                                                                                 |
| Ib           | Evidence obtained from at least one randomised controlled trial                                                                                      |
| IIa          | Evidence obtained from at least one well-designed controlled study without randomisation                                                             |
| IIb          | Evidence obtained from at least one other type of well-designed quasi-experimental study                                                             |
| III          | Evidence obtained from well-designed non-experimental descriptive studies, such as comparative studies, correlation studies and case control studies |
| IV           | Evidence obtained from expert committee reports or opinions and/or clinical experience of respected authorities                                      |

| <u>Grade</u>                                     | <u>Recommendations</u>                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A</b><br><br>(Evidence levels quality Ia, Ib) | Requires at least one randomised controlled trial as part of the body of literature of overall good and consistency addressing the specific recommendations.                       |
| <b>B</b><br><br>(Evidence levels IIa, IIb, III)  | Requires availability of well-conducted clinical studies but no randomised clinical trials on the topic of recommendation.                                                         |
| <b>C</b><br><br>(Evidence level IV)              | Requires evidence from expert committee reports or opinions and/or clinical experience of respected authorities. Indicates absence of directly applicable studies of good quality. |

## SESSION II

### MAJOR PSYCHOTROPIC HERBS

HYPERICUM  
KAVA-KAVA  
VALERIAN  
PASSIFLORA

## **HYPERICUM**

### **Phytopharmacology In Vitro**

1. Receptor Binding Studies
  - extracts and compounds bind to GABA, BZD, Opioid, NMDA Receptors

no conclusive mechanism of action

2. Reuptake inhibition
  - serotonin, noradrenaline, dopamine, GABA, and glutamate.
  - diverse mechanisms involved.

## **HYPERICUM**

### **Phytopharmacology In Vivo**

Various extracts show antidepressant effects in different models.

3. Phytochemical groups all + ve.

### Hypericum Perforatum (St John's Wort - SJW)

#### Clinical evidence

##### 3 meta-analyses

- (3) Linde *et al* BMJ 1996; 313: 253-8
- (1) Linde *et al* Cochrane Library 2003 issue 3.
- (2) Kim *et al* J. Nerv Ment Dis 1999; 187: 532-8.

##### 6 Systematic reviews

- Volz HP. Pharmacopsychiatry 1997.
- Hippius H. Curr. Med. Res. Opin. 1998.
- Wheatley D. CNS Drugs 1998.
- Stevenson EUR Neuropsychopharmacol 1999.
- Vitiello B. J Pharm Pharmacol 1999.
- Gaster B. Arch Intern Med 2000.

Confirmed efficacy of SJW preparations in mild to moderate but not severe depression.

### Hypericum perforatum

#### Negative clinical evidence

- Shelton *et al* JAMA 2001; 285: 1978-86

Patients with HAM-D > 20  
Average duration 2 years  
Sponsored by Pfizer

- Hypericum Depression Trial Study Group  
JAMA 2002; 287: 1807-14

Patients with HAM-D > 20  
Sertraline (Lustral) not active!

Conclusion: Study fails to support efficacy of SJW in moderately severe depression!

### Hypericum perforatum

#### Minor Depression

New study by National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and Office of Dietary Supplements.

Inclusion criteria  
2-4 symptoms

HAM-D score 10-17

Symptoms for 6 months but less than 2 years.

### Kava- Kava piper methysticum

#### Phytochemistry

1.  $\alpha$  pyrones, a.k.a. Kava lactones, Kavain, Dihydrokavain, Methysticin
2. Chalcones  
Flavokavains
3. Stigmasterol
4. n-cinnamoylpyrrolidine alkaloids

#### Content of $\alpha$ pyrones

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Plant                     | 3.5 - 5.0% |
| Alc/H <sub>2</sub> O      | 30%        |
| Acetone/ H <sub>2</sub> O | 70%        |

## Kava

### Phytopharmacology – In Vitro

- alc.ext enhanced binding to GABA<sub>A</sub> sites in brain.
- isolated Kava lactones weak binding to GABA<sub>A</sub> and Benzodiazepine receptors.
- effect not based on Benzodiazepine receptor.
- Kavain inhibits uptake of noradrenaline.
- no effect on serotonin.
- anticonvulsive, spasmolytic effects.

## Kava

### Phytopharmacology – In Vivo

Due to Kava lactones

Synergism important

- Amphetamine hypermotility reduced.
- Spontaneous motor activity reduced.
- Apomorphine - induced hyperactivity suppressed.
- Muscle tone decreased.
- Anticonvulsive effects.
- Neuroprotective effects.

## KAVA

### Phytopharmacology : Human Studies

#### Cognitive performance:

- Crossover, Kava, Placebo, Oxazepam.  
Negative effect on word recognition with Oxazepam but not Kava.
- No effect on alertness in undergraduates.

#### Vigilance

- no sedative hypnotic effects in EEG.
- mental performance better than placebo  
diazepam no better than placebo.

#### Sleep patterns

- improved quality.

### Meta analysis of Kava R.C.Ts

3 ex 14 included

Number of patients : 198

Inclusion criterion: Baseline HAM-A score of > 19.

Duration: 24 weeks

Dosage: ≈ 210mg Kava lactones/day

Product: WS 1490

Outcome: significant reduction in the HAM-A of 10 points in favour of Kava.

Adverse events: 1.5 – 2.3%  
G.I.T, allergic skin, headache, photosensitivity

Pittler & Ernst - J. Clin. Psychoph.2000

## Kava versus Benzodiazepines

n = 176

Kava ext. 210mg. Kava lactones/day  
Oxazepam 15mg./day  
Bromazepam 9mg./day

### HAM-A scores

|                    | <u>Kava</u> | <u>Oxaz.</u> | <u>Bromaz.</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| t <sub>0</sub>     | 27.3        | 27.7         | 27.3           |
| t <sub>6 wks</sub> | 15.6        | 16.6         | 13.4           |

no significant difference between Kava and Benzodiazepines.

Woolk *et al.*  
Z. Allgem. Med 1993

## Kava Kava Human Studies

Healthy volunteers 6 studies

R.C.T.'s in general anxiety states 3 studies

R.C.T.'s in anxiety/menopausal states 3 studies

Open studies 5

Other studies 3

Controlled studies with synthetic  
Kavain n = 6.

## Kava and Valerian for stress induced insomnia

Pilot Study n=24

Kava 120mg./day for 6 weeks

2 weeks wash-out

Valerian 600mg./day for 6 weeks.

Stress severity Insomnia severity

t<sub>0</sub> 178 t<sub>0</sub> 138

t<sub>6 weeks</sub> 126\* t<sub>6 weeks</sub> 107\*

t<sub>12 wks</sub> 117 t<sub>12 weeks</sub> 83\*

\*Statistically significant from baseline.

## Valerian

Phytochemistry

Valepotriates - Insoluble and unstable

Sesquiterpenes

Valerenal, Valerenic acid

Amino acids

GABA, Glutamine

Lignans

Hydroxy-pinoretinol - 5HT<sub>1A</sub>

Olivil - A<sub>1</sub> Adenosine receptor

Flavonoids

6-Methylapigenin - GABA<sub>A</sub>

## Valerian Phytopharmacology – in vitro

### Aqueous extract.

- influenced GABA transport
- inhibits GABA uptake
- enhances release

linked to GABA and Glutamine in ext.

### Various extracts.

- affinity for GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor
- affinity for barbiturate receptor
- weak affinity for Benzodiazepine receptor

### Aqueous and Hydro alcoholic extracts.

- stimulate release of GABA.
- EtOH ext (no GABA) not active
- displace muscimol bound to GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor
- inhibit binding to Adenosine receptor – sedative effect.

### Alcohol ext.

- Displaced melatonin from receptor

### Lignan

- Binds to opiate and 5HT receptors

## Valerian Phytopharmacology – In vivo

### Valepotriates.

Weak Sedative, decreased anxiety, aggression.

### Valerenic acid and valerenal.

non-specific CNS depressant  
decreased motility.  
prolongation of sleeping time.

### Extracts.

- central depressant
- no sedation or tranquillization
- anticonvulsive activity
- prolongation of anaesthesia
- reduced motility

## Clinical Studies with Combination Products

### Valerian/Hops (Rodenbeck 1998)

Sleep stage II increased.

Similar effect to Benzodiazepine.

### Valerian/Hops (Gerhard *et al*)

Compared to Flunitrazepam

All treatment groups reported improved sleep quality.

Only Flunitrazepam group reported hangover effects next day.

### Valerian/Melissa

Dressing *et al* 1996

Effective in insomnia

Useful in ambulatory patients

### Cerny and Schmid 1999

N = 98 Higher sleep quality vs placebo (33% vs 9%)

No serious adverse events.

## **Valerian**

### **Clinical Studies**

#### **Leathwood and Chauffard**

- Significant improvements in sleep latency and sleep quality.
- Effect more marked in poor sleepers.
- Subjective and objective ratings.
- 400 mg dried aqueous extract.

## **Valerian**

### **Clinical Studies continued**

#### **Double blind studies**

- subjective evaluation positive.
- significant improvement of sleep quality in 27 poor sleepers. RCT.
- relevant EEG changes in 12 female poor sleepers given 1.2 g ext. RCT.
- 14 elderly female poor sleepers – 405 mg. t.i.d. for 1 week. Increased slow wave sleep.
- 78 elderly patients – significant improvements in sleep latency and quality.
- 11,168 patients in an open trial.  
72% success in cases of sleep latency.  
76% success in cases of discontinuous sleep.  
72% success in cases of restlessness and tension.

## **Vorbach Study**

121 patients - significant sleep disturbance for at least 4 weeks.

600 mg. dry extract.

No acute effect in first 14 days

Marked placebo effect.

Clinical global impressions

(C1 scale)

Significantly better than placebo after 4 weeks

In 60% of patients both physician and patient assessment for Valerian was good or very good compared to 26% for placebo. Difference was highly significant statistically. ( $p < 0.001$ ).

## **Comparison of Valerian with Oxazepam**

N = 75 randomised insomniacs  
600 mg Valerian dry extract

**Or**

10 mg oxazepam

Duration: 28 days

Outcomes.

Sleep quality improved in both groups.

**Conclusion:** no statistical difference between Valerian and Oxazepam.  
Adverse effect profile of Valerian more favourable.

## **Passiflora incarnata**

### **Phytochemistry**

Flavonoids – C glycosides of apigenin

Maltol – may be an artefact

Cyanogenic glycoside

Harman type alkaloids

## **Passiflora**

### **Phytopharmacology – In vitro**

Dry extracts and 2 main flavonoids did not interact with Benzodiazepine binding site.

EtOH extract inhibited binding to GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor.

## **Passiflora**

Phytopharmacology – In vivo  
Passiflora has shown sedative effects in rodents.

- prolonged sleeping time induced by barbiturates (>40%).
  - reduced spontaneous motor activity 2 studies.
  - reduced amphetamine – induced hyper motility (<17%).
  - inhibited aggression and restlessness caused by amphetamine.
  - anxiolytic effects demonstrated.
- Constituents responsible not yet clear.

## **Passiflora**

### **Study in humans**

RCT

Crossover design

12 Healthy female volunteers.

1.2g Passiflora extract

or 10 mg Diazepam

or Placebo

140 minutes later 100mg caffeine

Alertness – wide awake – almost asleep.

Passiflora reached 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Diazepam value.

Quantitative EEG

no difference between Passiflora and placebo.

Schulz, *et al*  
Phytomedicine 1998.

### **Clinical Studies with Passiflora**

Generalized Anxiety Disorder.  
DSM IV Diagnosis

Randomised Double Blind

Group 1. Passiflora drops and placebo tablet

Group 2. Oxazepam tablets and Passiflora drops

Results: Significant reduction in HAM - A

Day 4 Oxazepam

Day 7 Passiflora

Less side effects Passiflora

Akhondzadeh *et al* 2001.

### **NIMH**

James Postlethwaites  
Sleep Formula for Drug Dependency  
Treatment

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Equal parts of dried herbs of:

Skullcap

Chamomile

Motherwort

Damiana

Passiflora

Red clover

Vervain

European J. Herbal Med. 1994.

## SESSION III

### MINOR PSYCHOTROPIC HERBS

HUMULUS

CHAMOMILE

MELISSA

CALIFORNIAN POPPY

LAVENDER, LETTUCE

TROPHORESTORATIVES

## **Hops**

*Humulus lupulus*

### **Phytochemistry**

1. Bitters:
  - (a) Lipophilic soft resin
    - humulones
    - lupulones
  - (b) Hard resin
    - hydrophilic  $\sigma$  resin
    - lipophilic  $\gamma$  resin
2. Essential oil:

traces of 2-methylbutenol  
(approx. 0.15% after 2 years).
3. Chalcones, flavonoids
  - prenylated flavonoids  
(potential phytoestrogens).

## **Hops**

### **Phytopharmacology – In Vivo**

- spontaneous motor activity depressed.  
(500mg extract per kg body weight)
- prolongation of sleep time.
- 2 Methylbutenol (800mg/kg)  
CNS depressant activity.  
  
comparable to chemically similar  
commercial sedative Methylpentynol.
- no phytoestrogen effects from bitters  
or essential oil.
- phytoestrogen effect from prenylated  
flavonoids.
- colupulone  
induces cytochrome P450.

## **Chamomile** **Matricaria recutita**

### **Phytochemistry**

1. Essential oil  
sesquiterpenes eg. bisabolol  
spiroethers.
2. Flavonoids
  - Apigenin – 7 – glucoside
3. GABA
4. Coumarins, phenolic acids,  
polysaccharides.

## **Chamomile**

### **Phytopharmacology – In vitro**

- Apigenin inhibits flunitrazepam binding to  
Benzodiazepine receptor.
- No effect on GABA receptor.
- Fractions from MeOH EXT.
  - block binding to Benzodiazepine  
receptors (central & peripheral).

## **Chamomile**

### **Phytopharmacology – In vivo**

#### **Extract**

- reduced spontaneous motor activity.
- reduced explorative activity.
- prolonged sleeping time.

#### **Essential oil**

- inhalation < stress markers
- effect blocked by flumazenil  
(Benzodiazepine antagonist).

## **Chamomile**

### **Clinical studies**

#### **Chamomile Tea**

12 patients undergoing cardiac catheterisation.

Deep sleep in 10 patients.

No cardiac effects.

Gould *et al.* 1973

## **Lemon Balm** **Melissa officinalis**

### **Phytochemistry**

1. Essential oil
  - Citrol
2. Flavonoids
  - Apigenin and relatives
3. Rosmarinic acid
4. Triterpenes

## **Lemon Balm**

### **Phytopharmacology – In vivo**

#### **Essential oil**

- contradictory evidence of sedative effects.

#### **Lyophilised hydroethanolic extract.**

- prolonged sleeping time after barbiturate.
- sleep induced after low doses.
- sedative effect in activity models.

### Lemon Balm Clinical Studies

- Ballard *et al* J Clin Psychiat. 2002;63:553-8 RCT of Melissa Oil in patients with severe dementia
- 60% ( Placebo 14%) showed 30% reduction in agitation
- Kennedy *et al* Pharmacol Biochem. Behav.2002;72:953-964
- RCT of Extract in healthy young people : self-rated "Calmness" increased & "Alertness" reduced

### Californian Poppy

No. RCT

#### French Case Studies

1. 32 year old female insomniac.  
3 weeks tinct. of Californian Poppy.  
Sleep pattern normal.
2. 44 year old male.  
1 month similar results.
3. 150 patients with insomnia.  
60% improved.

**Safety:** Low acute toxicity.  
Concern over cytotoxicity in pregnancy.

### Californian Poppy *Eschscholtzia californica*

#### Phytochemistry

Benzophenanthridine alkaloids  
chelerythrine  
sanguinarine  
- cytotoxic compounds!

No Morphinan alkaloids

### Californian Poppy

#### Phytopharmacology – In Vitro

- binding to opiate receptors
- inhibition of enzymatic degradation of catecholamines (adrenaline, dopamine)

#### Phytopharmacology - In Vivo

- aqueous extract  
anxiolytic and sedative in mice.

## **Mills and Bone**

**Nervine tonics and  
Trophorestoratives**

### Herbal sedatives and Hypnotics

Corydalis, Humulus, Lactuca

Passiflora, Kava

Piscidia, Scutellaria

### Trophorestoratives

Avena, Hypericum, Scutellaria

Damiana, Verbena, Withania.

## **Indications for Trophorestoratives**

Nervous exhaustion

Neuralgia, herpes infection

Depressive states

Insomnia

Convalescence

Neurasthenia

Mills and Bone

## SESSION IV

### ADVERSE REACTIONS & INTERACTIONS

#### GENERAL PHYTOTOXICOLOGY HEPATOTOXICITY & KAVA INTERACTIONS

Kava & Valerian  
Hypericum

#### REGULATORY ISSUES BIBLIOGRAPHY

### FINAL DISCUSSION & CLOSE

## Valerian Phytotoxicology

1. Acute toxicity: low  
Repeated dose toxicity: low -
2. Mutagenicity/carcinogenicity.  
valerpotriates mutagenic and cytotoxic
3. Interactions.  
no evidence of synergism with Ethanol.  
- EMEA - "none reported".
4. Ability to drive and use machines  
Valerian syrup: vigilance impaired 1-2 hrs.  
EMEA - "may cause drowsiness....This effect may  
be enhanced by consumption of alcohol"!!
5. Pregnancy and lactation.  
no experimental evidence - not recommended.  
no effects reported from common usage.
6. Dependence potential.  
none known - unlikely.

## KAVA

### Phytotoxicology

Acute toxicity: low  
Repeated dose toxicity: low  
Reproductive toxicity:  
DHM - no teratogenic effect  
Mutagenicity: none

Preclinical Safety  
n= 3029 patients: 2.3% adverse  
effects (minor)  
n= 1673: 1.73%

## St. John's Wort

### Side effects

1. Photosensitivity due to hypericin.
2. Neuropathy.
3. Mild GIT disturbances.
4. Restlessness, fatigue, headache, allergic  
reactions.

# KAVA

## Hepatotoxicity

- 1988 Study: GGT Levels elevated in Aboriginal heavy users.
- No reports prior to late 1990's.
- 68 cases to July 2002
  - 6 liver transplants
  - 3 deaths
- Probable link in 15 cases  
definite link in 2 cases
- Key factors – 210mg Kavalactones/day  
– > 8 weeks use
- Relative risk

|          |                                |
|----------|--------------------------------|
| Diazepam | 2.12 cases/million daily doses |
| Kava     | 0.89 cases/million daily doses |

Lower than for Voltarol, Losec!

## Responses to Kava-Kava Ban

### 1. Kommission E - Germany

- Prescription control.
- Use only for GAD.
- Max. dose of 120 mg. Kavalactones/day.
- Use for max. of 2 months.
- Monitor liver enzymes.
- Contraindicated in liver disease.
- Contraindicated with hepatotoxic drugs e.g.  
 $\beta$ -blockers, antidepressants, migraine analgesics, paracetamol
- Caution with alcohol.

## Responses to Kava-Kava Ban

### 2. American Botanical Council

- Not to be used by patients with liver problems.
- Not to be used with other potentially hepatotoxic drugs.
- Not to be used by regular consumers of alcohol.
- Restrict to max. of 4 weeks use.
- Discontinue use if jaundice appears.

### St John's Wort Interactions I

- Induction of cytochrome P450 Isoforms

#### Medication affected

- < theophylline
- < cyclosporin\*
- < warfarin\*
- < ethinylloestradiol
- < phenprocouman
- < irinotecan + other anticancer drugs

\* Life threatening

### St John's Wort Interactions II

- Induction of transporter P-Glycoprotein – a drug pump.

#### Medication affected

- < cyclosporin\*
- < digoxin
- < indinavir\*
- < ritonavir

\*Life threatening.

### St John's Wort Interactions III

- Pharmacodynamic

#### Medication affected

SSRI – type antidepressants  
Anti-migraine Triptans

Results: Serotonin Syndrome

## Kava interactions

### 1. Alcohol

Kava extract & alcohol (BAC 50mg %) in 40 volunteers.

No negative safety relevant effects.

Some evidence of counteracting effect.

### 2. Benzodiazepines.

Interaction with alprazolam (Xanax)<sup>®</sup> reported.

Cimetidine & terazosin also involved.

Cimetidine/alprazolam interaction?

No interaction with Bromazepam reported.

## **Selected Bibliography**

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phytomedicinals.  
Haworth Press 1999.

**6. Schulz, Hansel, Tyler**  
Rational Phytotherapy – a physicians guide to  
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