

Chinese Herbs for Endometriosis may have comparable benefits with fewer side effects than conventional drug treatment

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Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) may relieve symptoms in the treatment of endometriosis, according to a study published today. A systematic review by researchers at the University of Southampton found some evidence that women had comparable benefits following laparoscopic surgery and suffered fewer adverse effects if they were given Chinese herbs compared with conventional drug treatments.

Endometriosis is a gynaecological disorder affecting as many as one in six women of reproductive age. It can cause pelvic pain, irregular and painful periods, and infertility. Surgical treatments do not always lead to long-term improvement in symptoms and drug treatments can have unpleasant side effects such as hot flushes, acne and weight gain.

The researchers conducted the first English language systematic review of CHM for treatment of endometriosis. Two trials, which focused on a total of 158 women, were included in the review. In one trial, CHM provided symptomatic relief comparable to that provided by the hormonal drug gestrinone, but with fewer side effects. In the other trial, CHM was more effective than the hormonal drug danazol, and also resulted in fewer side effects.

“These findings suggest that Chinese herbs may be just as effective as certain conventional drug treatments for women suffering from endometriosis, but at present we don’t have enough evidence to generalize the results,” says lead researcher Andrew Flower of the Complementary Medicine Research Unit at the University of Southampton.

The research was conducted in partnership with the Cochrane Centre of Beijing, China and published today by the Cochrane Library.