



Shaklee Health Sciences e-Bulletin

Fall 2007

New study shows Echinacea helps reduce likelihood of contracting a cold as well as shorten its duration.

According to researchers at the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, Echinacea actually reduces the chances of catching the common cold by **58 percent** and reduces **the duration of the common cold by nearly one and a half days!** The study on Echinacea, one of the world's most popular botanical dietary supplements, was published in the July 2007 issue of the prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

The researchers combined the results of 14 different clinical trials involving more than 1,300 patients who were studied for Echinacea's effect on preventing the common cold and more than 1,600 patients studied for Echinacea's effect on limiting cold duration. This study design is known as a meta-analysis, a set of statistical techniques for combining information from different studies to derive an overall estimate of a treatment's effect. It's a well-accepted scientific approach to combine and evaluate data from many different studies that often have mixed results.

What's interesting about the University of Connecticut findings is that they stand in stark contrast to a high profile study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2005, which discounted Echinacea's cold-fighting effects. That study was actually included in the University of Connecticut meta-analysis, but was conducted using Echinacea dosage levels thought to be well below the levels recommended by such authorities as the World Health Organization (WHO), which probably affected its results.

The University of Connecticut meta-analysis included only randomized, placebo-controlled, peer-reviewed studies of the highest scientific caliber, and the researchers were able to discern effects that the smaller, individual studies were unable to determine on their own. The investigators determined that a) Echinacea reduced the incidence of the common cold when taken alone and in combination with other dietary supplements; and b) Echinacea reduced the incidence of the common cold whether study subjects were exposed to viruses naturally or inoculated with a particular virus as part of a comprehensive and rigorous scientific study design.

The key takeaway message from the study is that "Echinacea does indeed have powerful cold prevention and cold treatment benefits," at least according to Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice Craig Coleman, the lead author of the study. He further stated that "the significance of that finding becomes clear when you consider Americans suffer from one billion colds annually and spend about \$1.5 billion annually for doctor's visits and another \$2 billion annually on non-prescription cough and cold treatments."

Mark Blumenthal, founder of the American Botanical Council called the new analysis "good news," and the scientists at Shaklee applaud the study investigators. We also agree with them in believing that more controlled scientific research is needed to better understand exactly how Echinacea can best serve in both the prevention and treatment of the common

cold. But until that research is completed, the findings of this meta-analysis confirm the positive results seen in several other studies, so keep your Echinacea on hand to take at the first sign of a cold or flu.

Be well.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Jamie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Jamie McManus MD, FAAFP

Chairman, Medical Affairs, Health Sciences and Education