

[IMAGE]

St. John's Wort: Effective Treatment for Depression

Written records document the use of *Hypericum perforatum*, otherwise known as St. John's wort, as early as the Middle Ages. Some accounts trace its use back to the ancient Greeks, who purportedly utilized extracts of the flowering plant as a treatment against demonic possession.

Today, millions of depression sufferers are turning to St. John's wort to relieve their condition, and for good reason. Witness the results of a study that appeared in the September 2, 2000 issue of the *British Medical Journal*. Three hundred and twenty-four patients with mild-to-moderate depression received 250 mg of pharmacy-grade St. John's wort extract or 75 mg of imipramine, (one of the most commonly prescribed tricyclic antidepressants) twice daily.

After six weeks of treatment, St. John's wort and imipramine were deemed equivalent in terms of their effect on depression symptoms, with a subscale of the depression rating scale indicating a significant advantage for St. John's wort. Patients also tolerated St. John's wort and reported fewer adverse reactions than patients taking the prescription medication.

Some countries utilize St. John's wort to treat depression more frequently than other well-known depression medications such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft. As the results of this study suggest, they may be on to something. Talk to your doctor about the potential benefits of St. John's wort and other herbal extracts.

Reference:

Woelk H. Comparison of St. John's wort and imipramine for treating depression: randomized controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*, Sept. 2, 2000: Vol. 321, pp536-39.

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