

Chinese ants show promise for fighting arthritis, other diseases

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Chemists have identified substances in Chinese medicinal ants, above, that show promise for fighting arthritis, hepatitis and other diseases. Credit: Courtesy of Zhi-Hong Jiang, Hong Kong Baptist University

Ants may be an unwelcome intruder at picnics, but they could soon be a welcome guest in your medicine cabinet. Chemists in China report identification of substances in a certain species of ants that show promise for fighting arthritis, hepatitis, and other diseases. Their study is scheduled for the April 25 issue of ACS' *Journal of Natural Products*.

For centuries, ants have been used as a health food or drink ingredient in China to treat a wide range of health conditions, including arthritis and hepatitis. Researchers suspect that these health effects are due to anti-

inflammatory and pain-killing substances in the ants. However, the exact chemicals responsible for its alleged medicinal effects are largely unknown.

In the new study, Zhi-Hong Jiang and colleagues analyzed extracts from a particular species of Chinese medicinal ant (*Polyrhachis lamellidens*) commonly used in folk medicine.

The researchers identified at least two polyketides, potent natural products also found in plants, fungi and bacteria that have shown promise in studies by others for fighting arthritis, bacterial infections, and a variety of other diseases.

Source: ACS

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