

Study finds Chinese food good for your heart

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A clinical study on patients who have suffered a heart attack found that a partially purified extract of Chinese red yeast rice, Xuezhikang (XZK), reduced the risk of repeat heart attacks by 45%, revascularization (bypass surgery/angioplasty), cardiovascular mortality and total mortality by one-third and cancer mortality by two-thirds.

The multicenter, randomized, double-blind study, was conducted on almost 5,000 patients, ranging in age from 18-70 over a five-year period at over 60 hospitals in the People's Republic of China. Corresponding author David M. Capuzzi, M.D., Ph.D, director of the Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program at Jefferson's Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine and Zonliang Lu, M.D., Ph.D, from the Fuwai Hospital at the Chinese Academy of Medical Science report their findings in the June 15th edition of the American Journal of Cardiology.

"It's very exciting because this is a natural product and had very few adverse side effects including no abnormal blood changes," said Capuzzi. "People in the Far East have been taking Chinese red yeast rice as food for thousands of years, but no one has ever studied it clinically in a double-blind manner with a purified product against a placebo group until now and we are pleased with the results. However, people in the United States should know that the commercially available over-the-counter supplement found in your average health food store is not what was studied here. Those over-the-counter supplements are not regulated, so exact amounts of active ingredient are unknown and their efficacy has not been studied yet."

The study looked at patients who had suffered a heart attack in the previous year. Study participants were given two-300-milligram XZK capsules or a placebo and tracked over a five-year period. The XZK capsules contained a combination of lovastatin, lovastatin hydroxyl acid, ergosterol and other components.

"I think it is surprising that a natural product like XZK would have this great an effect," said Capuzzi. "If further testing and study prove true, my hope is that XZK becomes an important therapeutic agent to treat cardiovascular disorders and in the prevention of disease whether someone has had a heart attack or not. But it is important to recognize the fact we do not know exactly how Chinese red yeast rice works. The exact ingredients from the XZK capsules have not been isolated and studied yet. Still the results were so profound, even out performing statins prescribed in numerous western populations, that further study should certainly be investigated."

Source: Thomas Jefferson University

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