

# Chinese medicine herb may have the power to help heart attack patients

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A plant-based compound purified from the traditional Chinese herb, Astragalus, has the potential to improve the outcome of heart attack patients, new research has revealed.

Experts at Newcastle University, UK, have found that the product, known as TA-65, significantly reduces inflammation and, unlike current cardiovascular treatments, does not negatively impact immunity.

A study, published in *GeroScience*, showed that when TA-65 was given to [older patients](#) for over a year after their [heart](#) attack, it specifically increased lymphocytes, improving immunity of patients.

In addition, patients treated with the drug experienced far less complications, or issues such as chest or joint pains, following their heart attack.

## **Reducing inflammation**

Ioakim Spyridopoulos, a Professor of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Gerontology at Newcastle University, has led the study, working with the heart team at The James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

Professor Spyridopoulos said, "It has become widely recognized that inflammation plays a key role in the formation, progression, and rupture of a coronary plaque, which induces heart attack, but, importantly, it is also a major risk factor for further complications."

"Reducing inflammation is, therefore, considered a key treatment target following a heart attack for patients and our study showed that TA-65 reduced inflammation by up to 62%."

"While some potent anti-inflammatory drugs have been shown to improve outcomes after heart attacks, they result in suppression of the immune system and increase the risk of severe infections."

"In our study, the widely available drug TA-65 was shown to reduce inflammation but also appears to improve immunity by increasing a

patient's immune cells."

Scientists, including experts at The James Cook University Hospital, carried out a randomized controlled pilot study in which patients were given a placebo drug or TA-65.

The study was carried out on 90 patients aged 65 and over and performed as a Clinical Trial for Medicines under the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency conditions.

Patients had blood measurements taken at baseline, six months, and a year, to assess the study outcomes. Participants were reviewed regularly in the clinic to check them for any side effects.

TA-65 is a patented, plant-based compound that helps maintain or rebuild telomeres. It is isolated from the herb Astragalus, a traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years.

Those who received the TA-65 drug had few adverse effects, such as a fever or new medical problem, following their heart attack and, in fact, they showed 30% less adverse effects than the group given the dummy drug.

## **Clinical outcomes**

Professor Spyridopoulos, who also works at Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said, "If we can show that TA-65 improves the clinical outcomes of patients who have suffered a [heart attack](#), on top of modern treatment options, it will become an important addition to patients' medical care."

The research team would like to follow up with a further study to confirm the results in a larger trial and further research will focus on

whether TA-65 reduces adverse cardiac events, such as more heart attacks or even death.

Dr. David Austin, Consultant Cardiologist at The James Cook University Hospital, who was an author on the [research paper](#), said, "The James Cook University Hospital's heart unit serves more than 1.5 million people and has an excellent reputation."

"Our partnership with Newcastle University in this research study is part of our drive to continually improve treatment options for patients."

**More information:** Bilal Bawamia et al, Activation of telomerase by TA-65 enhances immunity and reduces inflammation post myocardial infarction, *GeroScience* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s11357-023-00794-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11357-023-00794-6)

Provided by Newcastle University

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