

Using flower power to fight foot woes

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A common flower that helps wipe out garden insects has also shown promise in eradicating stubborn warts, according to preliminary research presented by podiatrist Tracey Vlahovic at the American Academy of Dermatology's Annual Meeting on Feb. 1. Vlahovic is assistant professor at Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine.

Marigold Therapy, a line of creams, ointments, tinctures and oils developed and patented by chiropodist M. Taufiq Khan, contain extracts of several types of the marigold plant. Marigold has been used for nearly 30 years in the United Kingdom to treat a variety of foot issues, including bunions, tendonitis, plantar faciitis, fungal infections and verrucae, commonly known as plantar warts.

Vlahovic, who has a professional interest in phytotherapy — the use of plants for medicinal purposes — offers Marigold Therapy to her patients, and specifically investigated its use in three of her patients who had HIV as an alternative treatment for the small skin lesions called verrucae. She found that the treatments either cleared or greatly reduced the number and size of the warts in four to six sessions, after other treatments had failed to do so.

Plantar warts are a common occurrence among otherwise healthy adults, but in HIV patients, they are often harder to treat, more numerous and less receptive to common treatments such as cryotherapy or surgical removal.

"Mainstream treatments are sometimes not an option for HIV-positive patients because they have weakened immune systems and invasive procedures can further compromise them," Vlahovic said. "But alternative therapies like Marigold Therapy don't pose that threat." Further study is planned for a larger sample size with a standardized treatment regimen, she added.

While other generic marigold creams are available in most health food stores, only doctors certified by

the Marigold Clinic at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital can distribute Marigold Therapy products. Vlahovic is currently the only U.S. podiatrist with this certification.

"In Europe, alternative medicine is extremely popular and accepted in most medical circles," said Vlahovic, who blends phytotherapy with traditional Western medicine to treat her patients.

Marigolds have long been used as a treatment for a variety of health problems. In ancient Greece and Rome, marigold tea was used to combat sleep disorders and calm nerves. During the Renaissance, the yellow plant was used to treat everything from headache, red eyes and toothaches to jaundice and skin problems.

The plant's effectiveness on foot issues had not been widely studied until about 30 years ago, when Khan, founder of the Marigold Clinic, identified the healing properties of more than 57 species of the marigold plant, and found that different mixtures were effective in treating different foot problems. Khan's mixtures are manufactured through Marigold Footcare, Ltd., in London.

Vlahovic received training at the Marigold Clinic at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital to learn how to apply and dress the products, and to learn which combination of extracts would effectively treat each foot problem.

"All the mixtures work differently," said Vlahovic. "One mixture will have antiviral properties, which works best for treating a wart. Another mixture will have kerolytic qualities, which work best in treating corns and calluses."

In addition to Marigold Therapy, Vlahovic also offers a host of other natural treatments, such as Traumeel, a homeopathic medication, and Sarapin, made from the extracts of the pitcher plant, both used to relieve pain in overuse injuries. Vlahovic notes that these require little to no recovery time, and she can often treat a problem in just a few

treatments.

“I enjoy being able to offer my patients a combination of nontraditional treatments with Western medicine to give them the greatest benefit,” she said.

Vlahovic has even treated herself and family members with natural medicines.

Tony Vlahovic went to see his sister nearly five months ago in excruciating pain from plantar fasciitis, an overuse injury that affects the sole of the foot. Tony, a sports medicine therapist, told his sister that he could barely walk, and as a result, he couldn't function properly at his job as a physical therapist, or do any of the activities he enjoyed such as jogging.

Vlahovic treated her brother with Marigold Therapy once, and Tony said his pain was virtually gone afterward, and hasn't returned.

“I had tried things like Aleve and Advil, and did some reflexology to stretch out my foot,” he said. “It took care of the pain in the short term, but within a few hours, it would come back, and with a vengeance. But now it's been five months, and I'm pain-free.”

He noted that he was skeptical of trying an all-natural remedy, but decided to try it since it seemed to be the least invasive and least inconvenient.

“If I hadn't tried this, I would have either had to wrap my foot or get injection therapies, and both options would have made it difficult for me to get around,” said Tony. “But after my marigold treatment, I had complete mobility.”

Source: Temple University

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