

ELAGEN: ELEUTHEROCOCCUS SENTICOSUS

Immunoregulator and Biological Response Modifier

By Dr. Moira Williams

Much attention focuses on the immune system and the need for maintaining its complex cells at peak optimum levels and efficiency to prevent and treat illnesses from common viral infections such as colds and “flu” to more serious problems such as cancer and radiation damage. In Russia attention has focused on extracts from plants which have the ability to restore abnormalities of the immune system and to maintain normal levels, most notable amongst these extracts is Eleutherococcus Senticosus.

Many plant extracts have valuable medicinal properties which are overlooked owing to a reluctance in established orthodox medical practice to look beyond the major drug manufacturers. Since medicines were originally based on the use of herbs from which synthetic products were derived to meet clinical demands and processed to enhance efficacy, it seems paradoxical that these days herbal extracts have to prove themselves almost beyond reason before they can gain creditable acceptance. Eleutherococcus Senticosus is one such plant extract which has an established medical and clinical reputation abroad, being registered as a medicine in Germany and Russia.

Derived from the root of a thorny bush which grows only in the exacting climate of Eastern Siberia and its bordering territories, the Eleutherococcus extract has a centuries old traditional history of use by the indigenous populations. Used to counteract fatigue, prevent illness and help with the ageing process, Eleutherococcus first came to light as being of potent medicinal value in the 1950's, when a team of scientists led by Prof. I. Brekhman of the Far East Academy of Sciences, set out to investigate the therapeutic potential of some 200 plants, of these few proved of any value, except the Eleutherococcus root which became an exciting scientific discovery. Eleutherococcus was especially noted for its ability to counteract the effects of stress. This preliminary work has led on to well over 1,000 research projects with Eleutherococcus, which continue to the present day.

No single active substance has been found to produce the full clinical effects of the Eleutherococcus extract. Scientific evidence indicates that Eleutherosides (active glycosides unique to the root) act synergistically to produce the pharmacological spectrum of action. These Eleutherosides are:

Eleutheroside A is a glycoside of daucesterol, Eleutheroside B is a glycoside of syringine, Eleutheroside B1 is a 7-a-D glycoside of isofraxidine, Eleutheroside C is ethyl— α -D galactoside, Eleutherosides D and E are di-B-D glycosides of syringaresinol and are dimers of Eleutheroside B. Also contained in the root are minerals Ca, P, K, Mg, Na, Al, Ba, Fe, Sr, B, Cu, Zn, Mn, Cr.

The complete mechanism by which Eleutherococcus exerts its immunomodulating effects remains elusive. Evidence suggests that it acts through a membrane stabilising action, promoting the transport of essential minerals into individual cells to enhance cellular function. Clinical research focuses predominantly on the immune system and the stress reaction.

ELEUTHEROCOCCUS SUPPORTING

THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AS AN IMMUNOMODULATOR.

Both healthy “normal” individuals and patients whose immune system is measurably depressed (by cancer, radiation exposure, radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments etc.) respond with significant increases in T-cell indices and Y-interferon production. T-helper cell levels and Natural Killer cell activity are elevated, Y interferon production by peripheral lymphocytes increase and the number of T suppressor cells is normalised or decreased. Eleutherococcus strengthens the immune defenses providing prophylaxis against common viral infections, protection against radiation exposure, antitoxic effects against the side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments, and gives immunological in chronic illness, post viral states and cancer.

At the renowned Cancer Research Centre of A.M.S. in Moscow, Eleutherococcus was used regularly. The majority of patients have depressed immune function which becomes even lower with the stress of surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Patients often have to terminate courses of chemoradiotherapy prematurely owing to critical falls in haematological indices caused by the treatments. Eleutherococcus enables longer, more effective treatments to be tolerated in many cases.



ELEUTHEROCOCCUS REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

Eleutherococcus allows a more economical use and release of the adrenal hormones, adrenalin and corticosteroids. In the stress reaction, adrenal hormones are released in a flood, raising heart rate, blood pressure and creating an arousal of the body to a state of fight or flight. An exhaustion phase is

reached where further stress becomes harmful. Chronic stress may have serious consequences upon many physiological systems in the body, and may lead to a breakdown in the immune system and serious disease. By allowing a steadier release of adrenal hormones, Eleutherococcus enables the body to cope better, delaying the harmful exhaustion phase and allowing quicker recovery. This is relevant to a broad spectrum of individuals, from athletes and people experiencing common everyday stresses to those suffering from acute or chronic illnesses.

Health and Prevention

Large scale studies proved conclusively the prophylactic benefits of using Eleutherococcus. In Russia between 1973 and 1975, 1,200 drivers at an automobile plant used courses of Eleutherococcus in Spring and Autumn. After one year, the percentage of sick workers in the control group was unchanged, in the group given Eleutherococcus the total disease incidence had decreased by 30%, the incidence of heart disease and systemic hypertension also reduced.

In 1975, a mass prophylaxis was carried out on 13,096 workers using Eleutherococcus, total disease incidence decreased by 30-50% in the Eleutherococcus group as compared to the control. In a 7-year study of truck drivers using Eleutherococcus the incidence of influenza reduced by more than 90% over the total period. Chest infections and bronchitis also decreased.

The Russian pharmacopeia, which registers Eleutherococcus as a medicine, recommends its use for:

- Overstrain (Fatigue)
- Convalescence after illness and surgery
- Prolonged debilitating disease
- Functional disorders of the nervous system including mood and weakness
- Initial stages of atherosclerosis

SPORTS: RECOVERY AND FITNESS

Russian Olympic athletes were officially recommended to use Eleutherococcus, particularly in the intense training programmes prior to major events. Being a natural substance which allows the body to adapt naturally physiologically and biochemically to stress, there is no question of it being banned. Eleutherococcus is noted for its ability to enable a faster recovery from exertion, improve stamina and performance and strengthen immunity. Increases in haemoglobin, oxygen uptake and utilization, with reduced levels of lactic acid build up are observed. Athletes, skiers, and weight-lifters are amongst many Russian sportsmen regularly using Eleutherococcus.

Russian cosmonauts, who are extremely wary about taking anything, use Eleutherococcus for training; in Space and for recovery on return to Earth. Without using Eleutherococcus, cosmonauts would have been unable to survive vigorous training for adaptation to weightlessness.

OTHER EFFECTS

Eleutherococcus is also used to increase sexual fertility, reduce the severity and recurrences of psoriasis and as an antioxidant against free-radical damage from pollution, radiation, sunlight etc..

STANDARDISATION

For an Eleutherococcus product to be effective, it is

essential that it is standardised against the known active Eleutherosides B and E to achieve a known and adequate dosage.

STANDARDISED ELEUTHEROCOCCUS PRODUCTS AVAILABLE
Elagen, standardized Eleutherococcus senticosus 2000mg equivalent capsules (400mg of 5:1 standardised extract)

DOSAGE INSTRUCTIONS

One or two capsules daily for a minimum of 3 months, taken after food.

CASE REPORTS

1. MR. 48 years old on chronic steroids for bronchial asthma, also suffering from extreme fatigue, depression and food allergies. After one week using one daily Elagen, an improvement in energy levels was noticed, within 2 weeks appeared less depressed, and more able to cope, within 2 months had become less vulnerable to infections and had increased stamina which was sustained.

2. L.S. Suffering from diagnosed post viral fatigue syndrome for several years, and had been bedridden. Following various treatments, progress was gained but was slow. Elagen capsules (2 daily) were given, within a month improvement was marked, energy levels increased, better sleeping patterns returned and muscular weakness diminished.

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