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**Strictly Embargoed until 00:01 hours (GMT), 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008**

This release focuses on two Cochrane Systematic Reviews on alternative medicine publishing next week in [The Cochrane Library](#), 2008, Issue 1, and their implications for practice.

To receive a full copy of the Reviews highlighted in this newsletter, or to arrange an interview with an author, contact Jennifer Beal +44 (0)1243 770633 or by email, [jbeal@wiley.com](mailto:jbeal@wiley.com).

**Reviews highlighted in this newsletter:**

- [\*\*Cranberry juice may help women with recurrent urinary tract infections\*\*](#)  
There is some evidence that cranberry juice may decrease the number of occasions when people notice they have a urinary tract infection (UTI), a Cochrane Systematic Review has found. This is particularly the case for those who have recurrent UTIs.
- [\*\*Hawthorn extract can help the heart\*\*](#)  
Taking hawthorn extract can help control symptoms of chronic heart disease such as low abilities to work and walk, and also improve a range of heart-related measurements.
- [\*\*Other new or updated Cochrane Reviews on alternative medicine\*\*](#)

**Cranberry juice may help women with recurrent urinary tract infections**

There is some evidence that cranberry juice may decrease the number of occasions when people notice they have a urinary tract infection (UTI), a Cochrane Systematic Review has found. This is particularly the case for those who have recurrent UTIs.

UTIs are one of the most common reasons why people seek outpatient medical treatment, and lead to over one million hospital admissions a year in the USA alone. Cranberries, and particularly cranberry juice, have been used for decades as a means of preventing or treating UTIs. The mechanism of action is unsure. One

theory is that molecules in the juice may make it harder for bacteria such as *E. coli* to stick to surfaces, and therefore make it difficult for an infection to build up.

A team of Cochrane Researchers set out to establish whether there was good evidence that cranberries were effective. They identified 10 studies that included a total of 1,049 participants. The trials compared various combinations of cranberry products, placebos and water.

They found some evidence that cranberry juice and capsules could prevent recurrent infections in women, although there was no evidence of benefit in elderly men or elderly women. In addition, cranberry juice had no benefit for people using catheters.

“It’s worth noting that many people in the trials stopped drinking the juice, suggesting that it may not suit everyone’s taste, or it may be too burdensome and costly to drink the two recommended glasses a day,” says lead researcher Ruth Jepson who works at the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Stirling, UK.

“We now need to discover how much a person needs to drink, and how long it needs to be used before the juice starts to have an effect,” says Jepson.

Jepson RG, Craig JC. Cranberries for preventing urinary tract infections. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD001321. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD001321.pub4.

**\*\*\*SEE [WWW.COCHRANE.ORG/PODCASTS](http://WWW.COCHRANE.ORG/PODCASTS) FOR A PODCAST BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS REVIEW, AVAILABLE FROM WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2008\*\*\***

## **Hawthorn extract can help the heart**

Taking hawthorn extract can help control symptoms of chronic heart disease such as low abilities to work and walk, and also improve a range of heart-related measurements.

Hawthorn extract is a popular herbal medicine in Europe and the USA. It is made from dried leaves, flowers and fruits of hawthorn bushes. Experiments show that the extract is capable of enabling the heart to beat more powerfully and increasing the amount of blood that flows through the heart’s muscles.

A group of Cochrane Researchers looked to see if hawthorn extract was better than placebo for treating patients with chronic heart failure. They identified 14 randomised control trials that compared the effects of adding hawthorn extract or placebo to conventional therapies. The trials involved a total of 855 patients and the data indicated that hawthorn extract:

- improved maximal workload,
- increased exercise tolerance,
- reduced oxygen consumption by the heart, and
- reduced shortness of breath and fatigue.

A few people reported mild nausea, dizziness and heart and stomach complaints.

“There is good evidence that, when used alongside conventional therapy, hawthorn extract can bring additional benefits,” says lead researcher Dr Ruoling Guo, who works in Complementary Medicine at Peninsula Medical School at the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, UK.

Pittler MH, Guo R, Ernst E. Hawthorn extract for treating chronic heart failure. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD005312. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005312.pub2.

**\*\*\*SEE [WWW.COCHRANE.ORG/PODCASTS](http://WWW.COCHRANE.ORG/PODCASTS) FOR A PODCAST BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS REVIEW, AVAILABLE FROM WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2008\*\*\***

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## **Extracts from a selection of other Cochrane Systematic Reviews**

This section contains extracts from a selection of other new or updated reviews on alternative medicine also publishing in The Cochrane Library 2008, Issue 1.

To receive a full copy of the results from this selection, or to arrange an interview with an author, contact Jennifer Beal on +44 (0)1243 770633 or by email, [jbeal@wiley.com](mailto:jbeal@wiley.com).

### **“Chinese medicinal herbs for acute bronchitis”**

(CD004560) by Wei et al

#### **Background**

Acute bronchitis is one of the most common diagnoses made by primary-care physicians. It is traditionally treated with antibiotics (although the evidence for their effectiveness is weak and modest at best), and other even less effective treatments. Chinese medicinal herbs have also been used as a treatment.

#### **Extract from the Implications for Practice findings**

There is not any evidence from randomised controlled trial to recommend the routine use of Chinese medicinal herbs for acute bronchitis yet. In addition, the safety of Chinese herbs is unknown due to the lack of toxicological evidence of these herbs, though adverse events were reported in some case reports.

### **“Chinese herbal medicine suxiao jiu xin wan for angina pectoris”**

(CD004473) by Duan et al

#### **Background**

Suxiao jiu xin wan is widely used in China for angina pectoris. The objective of this review is to determine the effects (benefits and harms) of suxiao jiu xin wan in the treatment of angina pectoris.

#### **Extract from the Implications for Practice findings**

Although trials of suxiao jiu xin wan alone or in combination with other anti-anginal treatments showed weak evidence of a reduction in symptoms and an improvement in ECG measurements, methodological concerns including concealment of allocation, lack of blinding, lack of statistical power, lack of information on hazards of treatment, and lack of other clinically relevant outcomes, make the role of suxiao jiu xin wan in the management of angina pectoris uncertain.

- Ends -

## Notes for editors

1. The Cochrane Library contains high quality health care information, including Systematic Reviews from The Cochrane Collaboration. These Reviews bring together research on the effects of health care and are considered the gold standard for determining the relative effectiveness of different interventions. The Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org>) is a UK registered international charity and the world's leading producer of systematic Reviews. It has been demonstrated that Cochrane Systematic Reviews are of comparable or better quality and are updated more often than the Reviews published in print journals.
2. The Cochrane Library can be accessed at <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>. Guest users may access abstracts for all Reviews in the database, and members of the media may request full access to the contents of the Library. For further information, see contact details below.

A number of countries have national provisions by which some or all of their residents are able to access The Cochrane Library for free. These include:

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India	<a href="http://www.icmr.nic.in/">http://www.icmr.nic.in/</a>
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Scotland	<a href="http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk">http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk</a>
Spain	<a href="http://www.update-software.com/Clibplus/ClibPlus.asp">http://www.update-software.com/Clibplus/ClibPlus.asp</a>
South Africa	<a href="http://www.sahealthinfo.org/evidence/databases.htm">http://www.sahealthinfo.org/evidence/databases.htm</a>
Sweden	<a href="http://www.sbu.se">http://www.sbu.se</a>
Wales	<a href="http://www.thecochranelibrary.com">http://www.thecochranelibrary.com</a>
The Canadian Province of New Brunswick	<a href="http://www.gnb.ca/0003">http://www.gnb.ca/0003</a>
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The US State of Wyoming	<a href="http://wyld.state.wy.us/dbloginform.html">http://wyld.state.wy.us/dbloginform.html</a>

3. The Cochrane Library is available with free one-click access to all residents of countries in the World Bank's list of low-income economies (countries with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of less than \$1000). Access to The Cochrane Library for low-income countries is via Wiley-Blackwell IP recognition, a system which recognises the country a user is in.

There are also several programmes, such as the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) that provide access in developing countries. To find out whether your country is included in any of these programmes/provisions, or to learn how to get access if you don't already have it, please visit: <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>.

4. A new feature from The Cochrane Library for 2008: a collection of podcasts on a selection of Cochrane Reviews by the authors will be available from <http://www.cochrane.org/podcasts> from Wednesday 23rd January 2008. For Issue 1, 2008, the podcast topics are:
  - Hand washing can reduce diarrhoea episodes by about one third
  - Music therapy may offer hope for people with depression
  - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are effective for short-term relief of low-back pain
  - No high quality studies to reduce MRSA infection in nursing homes for elderly people
  - Cranberry juice may help women with recurrent urinary tract infections
  - Hawthorn extract can help the heart

If you would like to see a full list of Reviews published in the new issue of The Cochrane Library, or would like to request full access to the contents of The Library, please contact:

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<sup>a</sup> Jadad AR, Cook DJ, Jones A, Klassen TP, Tugwell P, Moher M, et al. Methodology and reports of systematic Reviews and meta-analyses: a comparison of Cochrane Reviews with articles published in paper-based journal.