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Thursday, 2 May, 2002, 18:14 GMT 19:14 UK

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Indian herb can reduce cholesterol



Ayurvedic medicine has been practised for 3,000 years

An extract from a small tree found across Arabia and India can help to reduce cholesterol, scientists have discovered.

The extract, called gugglipid, comes from the guggal tree and has been used in Ayurvedic medicine, a traditional Hindu medicine, for nearly 3,000 years.

It received regulatory approval in India in 1987 and is used to treat a range of conditions including obesity and lipid disorders.

Until now there has been little support for its use in conventional medicine. But scientists in the US say they have found evidence to back giving it to patients with high cholesterol.

“**There has been clinical data from India for years showing that gugglipid is effective**”

**Kanu Patel,
Ayurvedic
practitioner**

Key role

Experts from UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, found that the extract blocks the body's Farnesoid X Receptor (FXR).

This receptor plays a key role in managing cholesterol levels by triggering the process in which the body converts cholesterol to bile acids.

It this process happens too quickly the body is

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not able to get rid of enough cholesterol, leaving levels high and increasing the risks of heart disease.

The researchers said their findings, published in the latest issue of Science magazine, could pave the way for the use of guglipid in new cholesterol-lowering drugs.

However, they have warned that the extract, which can be obtained in some health food stores, may interact adversely with existing treatments.

They added that some of the other claims concerning the drug, for instance that it helps in weight loss, could not be proven.

Nancy Urizar, of Baylor College and one of the authors, said: "While we have seen promising results concerning the drug's cholesterol-reducing ability, there is a lot out there on the Web that we can't support."

Unsurprising

Kanu Patel, who practices Ayurvedic medicine in Leicester, said he was not surprised by the findings.

"There has been clinical data from India for years showing that guglipid is effective.

"Scientists in the US are only starting to look at it now but really we have known this for years."

There has been a growing interest in Ayurvedic medicine in the UK in recent years.

Thames Valley University in London has offered a degree course in Ayurvedic medicine since 1998.

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