

Study looks at Chinese herb use for SARS

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Scientists at the West China Hospital in Sichuan say they've found the addition of Chinese herbs to current SARS therapy does not decrease death rates.

However, the researchers led by Dr. Xuemei Liu found herbal therapy may improve symptoms associated with SARS -- severe acute respiratory syndrome.

SARS was first reported in Asia in February 2003, and then spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe and Asia before being contained. The World Health Organization says 8,098 people worldwide became sick with SARS during the 2003 outbreak and 774 died.

"Chinese herbs combined with Western medicines made no difference in decreasing morbidity vs. Western medicines alone," the scientists wrote, adding, "It is possible Chinese herbs combined with Western medicines may improve symptoms and quality of life" for SARS patients, and may reduce their need for steroids while decreasing the inflammatory cells in their lungs.

There is no definitive treatment or vaccine for SARS.

The research appears in the current issue of The Cochrane Library.

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