

'Dragon's blood' quenches stomach ulcer bacteria

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This wood contains a reddish resin called "dragon's blood" which shows promise for fighting stomach ulcers. Credit: Courtesy of Zhizhang Peng, China

“Dragon’s blood” may sound like an exotic ingredient in a witch’s brew or magic potion. But researchers in China are reporting that the material — which is actually a bright red plant sap used for thousands of years in traditional Chinese medicine — contains chemicals that were effective in laboratory experiments in fighting bacteria that cause millions of cases of gastrointestinal disease each year. Their study is scheduled for the current issue of *ACS’ Journal of Natural Products*.

In the new study, Weimin Zhao and colleagues indicate that “dragon’s blood” has been used for years in China and other countries as a folk remedy for stomach ulcers, blood clots, and other conditions.

Researchers, however, have never identified the active ingredients in dragon's blood responsible for its beneficial health effects on peptic ulcer and preventing blood clots.

The researchers isolated 22 different compounds from the powdered stems of *Dracaena cochinchinensis*, a common source of dragon's blood. The scientists tested the compounds' effects on *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*), the bacteria known to cause most cases of stomach ulcers and gastritis. Two of the compounds blocked the growth of *H. pylori*. In another part of the experiment, eight other compounds from dragon's blood inhibited blood clotting, suggesting their potential use in the prevention of the blood clot responsible for some strokes and most heart attacks, the scientists say.

Source: ACS

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