

Aloe vera for ulcerative colitis.(Literature Review & Commentary) (research report)(Brief Article)



Magazines

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Forty-four patients (aged 18-80 years) with mildly to moderately active ulcerative colitis were randomly assigned in a 2:1 ratio to receive, in double-blind fashion, aloe vera gel (100 ml twice a day) or placebo for four weeks. Patients were advised to start with 25-50 ml twice a day for up to three days, to insure tolerability. Clinical remission (defined as Simple Clinical Colitis Activity Index of 2 or less) occurred in 30% of patients taking aloe vera and 7% of those taking placebo ($p = 0.09$). Clinical response (defined as remission or improvement) occurred in 47% of patients taking aloe vera and 14% of those taking placebo ($p < 0.05$). Sigmoidoscopic scores and laboratory parameters (sedimentation rate, C-reactive protein, and others) did not differ significantly between groups. Adverse events were minor and were similar in the two groups.

Comment: Up to 50% of people with inflammatory bowel disease seek "alternative" treatments; in one survey, aloe vera was the most widely used herbal therapy by patients with this disease. Although previous studies have shown that aloe vera extracts have antiinflammatory activity, this is the first study to provide scientific support for aloe vera as a treatment for ulcerative colitis. Oral aloe vera appears to be safe, and this treatment should be considered as part of a comprehensive approach to the treatment of ulcerative colitis.

Langmead L, et al. Randomized, double-blind, placebocontrolled trial of oral aloe vera gel for active ulcerative colitis. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 2004;19:739-747.