

Dandelion juice for vesicular hand eczema, oral ingestion or topical?

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest the well-written article by Dr. Evy Paulsen titled “Oral ingestion of dandelion juice for vesicular hand eczema: Treatment or challenge?”.¹ This study demonstrated that oral ingestion of a dandelion juice made from fresh leaves and root of *Taraxacum officinale* had no clinical effect on the course of vesicular hand eczema in three adult female study participants.

We would like to contribute to the discussion of this study from a Chinese traditional medicine [TCM] perspective. Western medicine prefers to use herbal medicines such as dandelion singly to treat disease symptoms. The traditional method in China is to use dandelion in combination with other herbs. This herb is used orally or externally, and generally in combination with a variety of Chinese herbs; it is rarely used alone. TCM formulae containing two or more herbs can often obtain better curative efficacies and fewer side effects than a herb used singly.²

Traditionally in China, fresh dandelion is used externally: dandelion juice mixed with other traditional Chinese herbs powder would be made into a paste for external use; dandelion juice soaked gauze would be applied to the skin; or fresh dandelion would be mashed for external application.³ For hand eczema, we usually use conventional oral drugs along with TCM decoctions externally to soak the hands, because we find that this has better curative effects and can improve the patients' clinical symptoms.⁴ Dr Paulsen's study¹ revealed no clinically relevant effect of orally administered dandelion

juice on the course of vesicular hand eczema. In future studies, maybe researchers can try to change the oral use of dandelion juice to external use, with local rubbing on skin lesions or steeping hands after dilution (1-2 times a day or every other day, 10-15min each time, the number of times is adjusted according to the severity of hand skin lesions. At the same time, we should also pay attention to temperature control, it should not be too high. It is recommended to be close to normal body temperature). If used together with other traditional Chinese herbs, the efficacy is worth observing.

Processing (炮制; paozhi) of Chinese herbal decoction pieces can enhance the efficacy of drugs and reduce their toxicity.⁵ Therefore, when treating diseases, if we want to take dandelion internally, we usually prepare Chinese herbal decoction pieces of processed dandelion together with other herbs (generally 8-20 kinds) cooked together in water. Usually, we take 150-200mL three times a day. It is worth mentioning that there are few reports of gastrointestinal discomfort or allergies in the Chinese medical literature in those take prepared dandelion. However, we believe that the method of administration (oral and/or topical) will affect the results of the study. In our experience, for vesicular hand eczema, topical Chinese herbal medicines deserve more in-depth study.

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