Buchu

nature’s wonder pain reliever and anti-inflammatory

Inflammation is basically a protective response initiated to eliminate the initial cause of cell injury, e.g. infection and trauma. The inflammatory response dilates, neutralises and removes the inciting agent and sets into motion the process of tissue repair. This process can be categorised as either acute or chronic depending on the time frame and the immune cells involved.

Acute inflammation is relatively short in duration (minutes or days) and is characterised by the presence of leukocytes and predominantly neutrophils. While the effect of chronic inflammation is characterised by an accumulation of lymphocytes and monocytes and is associated with vascular proliferation and fibrosis (loss of mobility and deformed joints).

Buchu (Agathosma) is a fynbos shrub indigenous to South Africa, which is only found in areas of the Western Cape, which is only found in areas of the Western Cape. Its medicinal properties were first explored by the Khoe-Khoe, and later by the Dutch settlers arriving in the Cape. It uses are numerous ranging from rheumatism, arthritis, dysentery, gastritis, stomach ulcers, and boils and sores. Despite its wide-ranging uses (even as an alcoholic beverage when brewed to brendy), no scientific research has ever been published and no mechanism of action of its extracts has ever been studied. The volatile fraction of the oil distilled contains many potential natural boosters including cineol, carotol and pulegone, while the non-volatile fraction contains rosmarinic acid, sesamin, quercetin and vitamin B and B12 (all known antioxidants).

We have studied the anti-inflammatory properties of the extracted oils of Buchu as formulated in the newly released product Buchu Power at Tygerberg Hospital. We measured the ability of the oil fraction to inhibit both acute as well as chronic inflammation by using in vitro models, namely: (i) the ability to inhibit the expression of cytokines in the presence of phagocytes and macrophages; (ii) the ability to inhibit the production of oxygen radicals by phagocytes; and (iii) the ability to inhibit the release of cytokines (large cytokine-β) which is responsible for the wide-ranging physiological effects on bone, pain, abnormal and fibrous production, etc.

Summary of results:
- Buchu oil is a potent inhibitor of the oxidative burst by phagocytes, inhibiting this response by 87% at a very high dilution.
- Buchu oil extract has no significant inhibitory effects on the expression of viral molecules of human beta and alpha.
- The implication of the study is that the oil can still be used with 'safety' and vigour through the blood vessel wall to the site where they are required.
- Buchu oil inhibits the release of IL6 from macrophages when these cells are stimulated by stimuli encountered in nature.

The implications of these scientific findings and their clinical applications are numerous and include the use of the oil extract to reduce inflammation, both acute and chronic and the associated pain. Research on patients has continued with positive results. This product has important implications in the management of arthritis, rheumatism and any auto-immune joint-degrading processes. It is used in cases of rheumatism, osteoarthritis, and so on, and is well established. Due to the fact that the acute inflammatory response is profoundly inhibited, Buchu oil has been marketed for its use in the prevention of swelling and breaking down tissue trauma of soft tissues.