

ABSTRACTS OF INTEREST

Submitted by Emerson Ecologics

Pelargonium sidoides Extract Shortens the Duration of the Common Cold

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Reference: Lizogub VG, Riley DS, Heger M. Efficacy of a *Pelargonium sidoides* preparation in patients with the common cold: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial. *Explore* 2007;3:573–84.

Design: Randomized, double blind, parallel-group, placebo-controlled trial

Participants: 103 adult patients (18–55 years old) with at least two major and one minor or with one major and three minor cold symptoms for 24 to 48 hours. Major cold symptoms included nasal discharge and sore throat and minor symptoms included nasal congestion, sneezing, scratchy throat, hoarseness, cough, headache, muscle aches, and fever.

Study Medication and Dosage: Liquid extract (1:8–10; ethanol 11% [wt/wt]) from the roots of *Pelargonium sidoides* *; (Willmar Schwabe Pharmaceuticals, Karlsruhe, Germany) or placebo – 30 drops t.i.d.

Duration: 10 days

Outcome Measures: Following enrollment, patients were seen on days 3, 5, and 10. The primary outcome measure was the sum of symptom intensity differences (SSID) of the cold intensity score (CIS) from day 1 to day 5. The CIS consists of 10 symptoms considered to be associated with the common cold and are designated as major or minor (see above). At each patient visit, all symptoms except fever were rated according to a five-point verbal rating scale with zero meaning no symptoms to four being very severe. The maximum CIS score was 40 points. Secondary outcome criteria included diverse response according to the total CIS, changes of individual symptoms of the CIS, changes of further cold-related symptoms, ability to work, activity level, general well-being, health-related quality of life, time until onset of treatment effect, treatment outcome according to an integrative medicine outcome scale, and satisfaction with treatment according to the integrative medicine scale.

Key Findings: From baseline to day 5, the mean SSID improved by 14.6 ± 5.3 points in the *Pelargonium sidoides* group compared with 7.6 ± 7.5 points in the placebo group ($p < 0.0001$). The mean CIS decreased by 10.4 ± 3.0 points and 5.6 ± 4.3 point in the *Pelargonium sidoides* and placebo groups, respectively. Af-

ter 10 days, 78.8% of the *Pelargonium sidoides* group were clinically cured (CIS equal to zero points or complete resolution of all but a maximum of one cold symptom) compared to 31.4% in the placebo group ($p < 0.0001$). The mean duration of inability to work was significantly lower in the *Pelargonium sidoides* group (6.9 ± 1.8 days) compared to the placebo group (8.2 ± 2.1 days; $p = 0.0003$). Adverse events occurred in three of 103 patients (2.9%)—two in the *Pelargonium sidoides* group and one on the placebo group. All events were assessed as being minor.

Practice Implications: As noted in earlier reviews in this column, *Pelargonium sidoides* (also designated as EPs 7630) has been shown to safely and effectively treat acute bronchitis in both adults^{1,2,3} and children⁴ as well as tonsillopharyngitis in children.⁵ This new trial adds the common cold to the list of potential treatments for *Pelargonium sidoides*, demonstrating a significant reduction in the severity and duration of symptoms in those using the herbal extract. With new attention being paid to the danger of OTC cold medications in children, it would be nice to see a future pediatric common cold study with *Pelargonium sidoides*. It should be noted, however, that a large phase IV trial with patients ranging in age from 2 months to 93 years old found no significant adverse events in children under the age of 6 years using *Pelargonium sidoides*.⁴

***Note:** The *Pelargonium sidoides* used in this study is the active ingredient in Umcka® Cold Care (Nature's Way/MMS Pro, Springville, Utah).

REFERENCES

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- 5) Bereznoy V, Riley D, Wassmer G, Heger M. Efficacy of extract of *Pelargonium sidoides* in children with acute non-group a beta-hemolytic streptococcus tonsillopharyngitis: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *Altern Ther Health Med*. 2003;9:68–79.

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