

Australia: an Island of Hope for Men With Prostate Problems

For thousands of men with prostate cancer, the Chinese herbal formula PC-SPES was seemingly their last line of defense (PC = prostate cancer, SPES is Latin for hope). But those hopes were dashed in February 2002, when the FDA forced BotanicLab, the manufacturer of PC-SPES, to remove the product from the marketplace.

PC-SPES was not recalled because it didn't work...but because it wasn't what it said it was. BotanicLab claimed that PC-SPES was a mixture of eight herbs (Reishi, Baikal Skullcap, Rabdosia, Dyer's Woad, Mum, Saw palmetto, San-Qi Ginseng, and Licorice) used for supporting and promoting prostate health. And indeed, many studies were done on PC-SPES that showed it did have a positive effect on stopping the advance of prostate cancer.

One study reported in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (1998, volume 339 page 785) showed that eight prostate cancer patients treated with PC-SPES had significantly lower levels of serum testosterone and PSA (prostate-specific antigen). This is important because depriving

prostate cancer cells of testosterone kills significant numbers of these cells and can help keep the cancer in check. And PSA is a widely used marker for prostate cancer because PSA concentrations tend to increase when prostate cancer is present.

Even the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine saw enough promise in PC-SPES to fund four studies to review its effectiveness and how it worked in the body.

But then problems arose when a large majority of men using PC-SPES reported experiencing severe side effects like nipple tenderness, hot flashes, loss of sex drive, impotence, and breast swelling—signs of an estrogen effect in the body. (The New England Journal of Medicine study had suggested that the effectiveness of PC-SPES was due to an estrogenic effect.)

And when it was found that the product also led to hemorrhaging, testing revealed that PC-SPES contained not only herbs, but also the blood thinning drug coumadin (warfarin); DES (diethylstilbestrol), a synthetic estrogen once used to prevent miscarriages (later banned because it caused birth defects in children, blood clots, and other side effects); and the anti-inflammatory drug indomethacin which can cause ulcers, nausea, vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, headaches, depression, and fatigue. The FDA stepped in and made BotanicLab “voluntarily” stop selling PC-SPES.

BotanicLab claimed that these drugs must have “inadvertently” found their way into PC-SPES during the manufacturing process in China. But then the California Department of Health Services issued another bulletin on June 5, 2002 when their laboratory analysis of other BotanicLab products found that they too were laced with the following prescription drugs:

- Arthrin — Alprazolam, Indomethacin.
- HepaStat — Indomethacin.
- Neutralis — Indomethacin.
- OA Plus — Alprazolam, indomethacin.
- Ospro — Diethylstilbesterol (DES).
- Poena — Indomethacin.
- RA Spes — Alprazolam, indomethacin.

Because of these findings, BotanicLab went out of business in June 2002 and men with prostate cancer were left wondering where they could go—and what and whom they could trust—for treatment of their cancer.

New Hope From Down Under

Fortunately, on the other side of the world in Australia, one of the world's leading plant scientists, professor Peter Waterman, had also been taking a close look at PC-SPES before it was banned. Not knowing about the drugs in PC-SPES, he was puzzled that this herbal mixture caused such nasty side effects...and he was also interested in discovering other herbs that might be effective for treatment in prostate cancer.

Professor Waterman, a Doctor of Science from the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, went to Australia to become Director of the new Centre for Phytochemistry at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales. This center was established for the purpose of separating, isolating, and identifying compounds from natural sources that exhibit biological activity.

Professor Waterman was the ideal candidate for the position. He has authored over 450 papers and 50 books and book chapters, and he has lectured extensively at seminars throughout the world on drugs and natural products used in medicine. He is also highly respected worldwide for his knowledge of the chemistry of rain forest plants.

The main goal of the Centre for Phytochemistry was to understand the way in which herbal or plant-derived medicines cause their beneficial effects and to improve their quality, reliability and safety. And it was this goal that has now given new hope to men with prostate cancer.

A Groundbreaking Technique in Herbal Studies

What Dr. Waterman did is develop a breakthrough technique that allowed researchers the opportunity to scientifically observe and screen the numerous complex components of each individual herb...and how each herb or combination of herbs biologically works. This had never been done

before and gave researchers a tool for standardizing every single batch of any herbal product.

Previously, due to variations in soil, harvesting techniques, plant age, and other factors, there was no way to identify how various blends of herbs would work when combined together. For example, Dr. Waterman discovered during analysis that some herbs—when put together in a formula—cancel each other out in creating the desired effect. Even if they separately show desirable effects, Dr. Waterman’s new technique showed that when combined, some of these herbal mixtures lose their powers to create the desired effects in the body.

But now Dr. Waterman had a method for isolating and analyzing the activity of every single herb and herbal mixture. He and his researchers then worked for several months to carefully evaluate dozens of herbs to find a formula that could be used in the fight against prostate cancer cells. What they developed (and patented) was a unique herbal blend that has been shown to slow and possibly stop the growth of prostate cancer cells when tested in humans.

What’s in it?

The herbal formula developed by Dr. Waterman and his fellow researchers is called HP8. One of the things that makes HP8 so special is that some of the herbs in the formula are not found anywhere else on Earth except Australia. Due to 40 million years of isolation from the rest of the world’s landmasses, Australia has plants that evolved in unique ways and that contain specialized properties. HP8 contains a proprietary blend of these native Australian herbs, along with herbs from other parts of the world.

Using Dr. Waterman’s technique for evaluating the activity of each individual herb, every single batch of HP8 can be formulated to specifically obtain the maximum effect in the body when used against prostate cancer cells. And every ingredient is there for a specific reason. Some of the ingredients in HP8 are: Saw palmetto berry, bromelain powder, licorice root, willow herb leaf, grape complex seed and skin, wild rosella, passion fruit seed, and selenium (from selenium yeast).

To test the safety of HP8, Dr. Waterman conducted toxicology studies on dozens of herbs and found nothing that was the least bit harmful in the ingredients in HP8. And none of the men who were the first ones to take HP8 showed any side effects. Clinical trials will be conducted on HP8 in the future, but for now, one small study has shown how powerful HP8 can be in the fight against prostate cancer.

The study involved 14 men with elevated PSA levels or known to have prostate cancer. After six months on HP8, 10 of the men showed a drop in PSA levels of from 15.4% to 55.7% with the average being 43.5%. The other four men dropped out of the therapy. In three of those four men, PSA levels were continuing to increase and all four men opted for radiation, operations, or other therapies. No adverse side effects were observed in any of the 14 men.

The majority of the men also reported more energy, they could urinate more easily, and they felt better overall due to less pain and discomfort.

How Does it Work?

According to Dr. Waterman, HP8 does not kill prostate cancer cells but instead blocks a stage in the cell cycle and prevents the cells from dividing and multiplying. Cancer cells already in the body then age and die off and these dead cells can be handled by the body's immune system. HP8 has also been shown to be effective against prostate cancer cell lines that are hormone-sensitive and hormone-insensitive.

And for men suffering the effects of prostate enlargement (known as BPH, benign prostatic hypertrophy), HP8 provides relief. This is due to the selenium, fatty acids, enzymes, and other compounds in HP8 that are known to promote prostate health and treat BPH.

The inevitable question that arises now though is how can doctors, researchers, and prostate cancer patients trust HP8 after the fiasco with PC-SPES? And what makes HP8 better than all the other products still on the market that are claiming to be as effective as PC-SPES?

The answer is two fold.

First, Dr. Waterman and other researchers he works with are world-renowned phytochemists whose reputations are at stake. They cannot afford to be involved in the kind of deception that existed with PC-SPES. And as mentioned previously, Dr. Waterman is head of The Centre for Phytochemistry at Southern Cross University in Australia. This Centre has gained a reputation as one of the leading research facilities in the world for the study and development of medicinal plant extracts.

The Centre for Phytochemistry is one of four divisions of the Cellulose Valley Project established in 1999 at Southern Cross University for the in depth study of plants and their applications as herbal medicines. Cellulose Valley incorporates: The Research Centre for Phytochemistry, The Research Centre for Plant Conservation Genetics, The School of Natural and Complementary Medicine and a Technology Park devoted primarily to natural plant products.

Second, Dr. Waterman's groundbreaking techniques for standardization of individual herb components now gives him and his fellow researchers the ability to carefully and safely maximize the effectiveness of any herbal formula. It is this combination of research facilities and pioneering plant studies that separates HP8 from all the stuff in the marketplace that can't be trusted. HP8 has solid research and shows the same cancer fighting effects as the FDA approved chemotherapy drug Taxol and the pharmaceutical compounds in PC-SPES...but without the horrible side effects.

Where to Get it

HP8 is manufactured by Interhealth Biosciences Australia under the strictest pharmaceutical guidelines at a registered facility in Australia. It is distributed in the U.S. through American BioSciences of Blauvelt, N.Y. and sold through the Harmony Co. at 1-800-422-5518. The retail price is \$89.95 for a bottle of 90 tablets and shipping is free if two or more bottles are ordered. The most effective dose appears to be six tablets per day (three tablets each, twice daily). And HP8 works best when taken between meals on an empty stomach and without other supplements.

More testing and clinical studies will have to be done on HP8 to better understand its benefits and to fine tune the product. So Interhealth Biosciences Australia is currently looking for doctors and anyone else who can assist with the overseas research studies. To find out the requirements and information for these studies, contact American BioSciences at 1-888-884-7770.

Due to government regulations, when marketing HP8, no mention can be made of its effects on prostate cancer cells or PSA levels. The only thing that can be said is that it is a supplement that promotes prostate health. But at least now the hundreds of thousands of men around the world suffering from or dying from prostate cancer have a new, safe, effective alternative treatment available to them. For those men who cannot afford to wait for research results...have had conventional therapies fail them...or if other treatment options seem too drastic, HP8 is definitely worth checking out.