



A comprehensive herbal combination (Life Spice Vital) and self reported effects on cancer related symptoms and well-being, a pilot study

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Background: Cancer is a public health problem where patients are using a variety of complementary-alternative therapies, often not well researched.

Aim: The aim of the study was to evaluate whether the Life Spice Vital herbal combination in a daily dosage of 2 g/d, influenced self reported well-being and cancer related symptoms.

Methods:

Design and subjects: Open label pilot study of three month duration, with participation of 84 subjects, mean age was 57,5 y (range 24-82 y) with a mean time since diagnosis of 54 months (range 3-209 months). There were 54 women (64,3%) and 30 men , with 34,2% smokers, reflecting the high prevalence of smoking in Denmark. Metastasis were previously diagnosed in 43 (51,2 %). Cancer diagnosis represented 27 different types and 64 completed (76,1 %) the study, two (2,4%) were lost to follow up and 18 (21,4%) had died, 15 of these due to advanced disease and one each from an infection, a thrombosis and a bleeding episode, respectively, which occurred around time of inclusion and cannot be attributed to the intake of the food supplement. No subjects received oncologic treatment in the study period and intake of other food supplements were held stable.

Data collection: Individual information on diagnosis, disease stage, medical and life-style history was obtained for all subjects by interview, aided by semi quantitative questionnaires. Medical information from diagnosing/controlling hospital were obtained by the patient, ensuring that the cancer diagnosis were correct. Registration of self reported health were recorded on a registration form with predefined classification in six scores: 0 = very poor, 1 = poor, 2 = neither poor nor good, 3 = good, 4 = very

good, 5 = remarkably good. This applied for questions about physical performance, mood, sleep, appetite, thirst, digestion, breath, energy, spirits and memory. Questions about cancer related symptoms such as constipation, diarrhoea, weight loss, weight gain, pain, worry, mobility and loneliness were scored as 0 = none, 1 = some, 2 = medium grade, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much, 5 = severely disturbing. Questionnaires were filled in at start and after 12 weeks.

Analysis: Statistical analysis were performed with PC SAS, version 8.2 (SAS Institute, Inc. Cary, NC, USA). Changes over time were analysed by subtracting start score from 12 week score and recode the 6 categories to two or three: better and unchanged/worse. To determine if changes over time were more likely to be better than worse McNemars test for paired dichotomous variables were used. All tests were considered significant at the 5 percent level.

Findings: 40-59% reported improvements in their condition over the 12 week period, with respect to energy (p = 0,0002), physical performance (p = 0,0005), sleep (p = 0,002), overall digestive function (p = 0,003), breath (p = 0,05), mood (p = 0,01), appetite (p = 0,002), courage/spirits (p = 0,002), weight loss (p = 0,006), and mobility (p = 0,05), summarized in table.

Interpretation: Intake of a comprehensive herbal-botanical combination, improved well-being and relieved cancer related symptoms systematically in this open pilot study, thus being of potential relevance for relieving symptoms associated with cancer or its treatment, and help maintain or improve well-being in cancer patients.

TABLE					
Self reported effects on wellbeing and cancer related symptoms after 12 weeks intake of Life Spice Vital, n= 64					
Well-being:	n	Worse, n (%)	Unchanged, n (%)	Better, n (%)	p- value*
Energy	61	7 (11.5)	18 (29.5)	36 (59.0)	0.0002
Physical performance	62	5 (8.1)	23 (37.1)	34 (54.8)	0.0005
Mood	64	11 (17.2)	23 (35.9)	30 (46.9)	0.001
QoL	64	6 (9.4)	38 (59.4)	20 (31.3)	0.14
Courage/spirits	64	8 (12.5)	33 (51.6)	23 (35.9)	0.002
Cancer related symptoms:					
Digestion, overall function	63	8 (12.7)	24 (38.1)	31 (49.2)	0.003
Constipation	64	10 (15.6)	37 (57.8)	17 (26.6)	0.49
Diarrhoea	64	10 (15.6)	38 (59.4)	16 (25.0)	0.1
Appetite	64	6 (9.4)	27 (42.2)	31 (48.4)	0.002
Sleep	64	8 (12.5)	22 (34.4)	34 (53.1)	0.002
Breath	63	11 (17.5)	26 (41.3)	26 (41.3)	0.05
Mobility	64	11 (17.2)	34 (53.1)	19 (29.8)	0.05
Thirst	63	7 (11.1)	31 (49.2)	25 (39.7)	0.16
Pain	63	10 (15.9)	28 (44.4)	24 (38.1)	0.25

*McNemars test for paired dichotomous data