

## Chinese herbal medicine promising for menstrual pain

<b>Clinical question</b>	How effective is Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) for primary dysmenorrhoea (PD)?
<b>Bottom line</b>	Compared to placebo, no treatment, conventional medicine such as non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and the oral contraceptive (OC), acupuncture and heat compression, CHM reduced menstrual pain in the treatment of PD. It also improved overall symptoms and reduced the use of additional medication.
<b>Caveat</b>	These findings should be interpreted with caution due to the generally low methodological quality of the studies. There was no accurate description of the herbal preparations. The practice of Chinese medicine uses clusters of related symptoms to determine appropriate treatment and there are five or six different patterns of Chinese diagnostics which may correspond to the Western concept of PD.
<b>Context</b>	Dysmenorrhoea is a common complaint. NSAIDs and the OC have been used successfully but more women are looking for non-drug therapies. CHM has been used for centuries in China, and is commonly used in public hospitals in China for the treatment of PD.
<b>Cochrane Systematic Review</b>	Zhu X et al. <b>Chinese herbal medicine for primary dysmenorrhoea</b> . Cochrane Review 2007, Issue 4. Art No : CD005288.DOI : 10.1002/14651858.CD0005288.pub 2. The review contains 39 trials involving 3,475 participants, 36 of the trials were conducted in mainland China, one in Taiwan, one in Japan and one in The Netherlands.
Pearls No. 44 February 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy	

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners. They are funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group.

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases.

View PEARLS online at:

- [www.cochraneprietarycare.org](http://www.cochraneprietarycare.org)