No Problem in Hypertensive Patients? A Re-evaluation of the Literature Data on *Eleutherococcus senticosus*, radix

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Abstract

Introduction: *Eleutherococcus senticosus*, radix is indicated for symptoms of asthenia such as fatigue and weakness, which are rather common especially in elderly patients. However, most reviews and monographs including the EHPM monograph (1) state its contraindication in arterial hypertension, thereby excluding many, especially elderly patients from therapy with *Eleutherococcus*.

Aim: To evaluate whether the gain of safety created by the contraindication would outweigh the exclusion of a large proportion of patients potentially benefitting from the use of *Eleutherococcus*.

Method: A systematic database search was conducted in Embase and Medline. Key words were (*Eleutherococcus*) or (Acantopanax) or (Eleuthero) or (Siberian ginseng).

Results: A large number of clinical and preclinical studies, reviews and monographs was identified and evaluated systematically. All sources mentioning hypertension directly or indirectly referred to only two Russian publications, which were misquoted in a review from 1985 (2). In one study, 55 patients with rheumatic heart disease were treated with *Eleutherococcus*, two showed an increase in blood pressure. However, considering the heart disease, this is not necessarily a drug-related adverse effect. In the second study, the use of *Eleutherococcus* for patients with blood pressure values below 180/90 mm Hg even was recommended.

Conclusion: For *Eleutherococcus*, the contraindication arterial hypertension is not evidence-based. This finding should be addressed in the various monographs.

Discussion and Conclusions

The original Russian publications on *Eleutherococcus* mention hypertension as an adverse event in two patients out of a total of 4,300 (3,4). Both patients had rheumatic heart disease in which hypertension is part of the symptom complex. Furthermore hypertension is not mentioned as an adverse effect of *Eleutherococcus* in an analysis of pharmacovigilance databases from 2009 (15). In a risk-related publication it was speculated that *Eleutherococcus* “is consistently associated with increasing blood pressure” (16) without providing reproduceable or verifiable sources.

We therefore conclude from our analysis, that according to the published knowledge and the available pharmacovigilance information the contraindication “arterial hypertension” for *Eleutherococcus* is not evidence-based. There is no scientific base for the exclusion of hypertensive patients from the potential benefits of *Eleutherococcus*.

References