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Talking ‘Herbs & Iridology For Inflammation’
Inflammation and Resolution: Iridological observations and herbal solutions

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Context

• Inflammation is the key to correctly understanding many of the most common pathologies treated by medicine today
• Autoimmune inflammatory disease has increased dramatically over the last decade
• How can we understand this? And what can we do about it?
What is inflammation?

“...a response triggered by damage to living tissues. The inflammatory response is a defense mechanism that evolved in higher organisms to protect them from infection and injury. Its purpose is to localize and eliminate the injurious agent, and to remove damaged tissue components so that the body can begin to heal“

(Encyclopaedia Britannica)
What is inflammation?

• If inflammation is present, there has to be a trigger – an INJURY

• INJURY may take many forms:
  – Actual physical assault
  – Extremes of heat and cold
  – Toxins: chemical, microbial, endogenous, etc.
  – Radiation
  – Hypoxia
  – Stress
What is inflammation?

• Parisian immunologist Pierre Grabar (1898 – 1986) “saw levels of autoantibodies as a measure of the extent of tissue damage due to any cause. He saw their primary role as opsonins to identify and clutch onto protein molecules that should not be wandering around the body fluids, and present them to the active scavenger-defenders, the phagocytes, for destruction.”

(Mills, 1993, p.73)
What is inflammation?

• There is also evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of the *acute* inflammatory response is in direct inverse proportion to the level of stress in the individual:

• “the effects of stress on wound healing are mediated by the HPA”

  (Evans, Hucklebridge and Clow, 2000)

• It is possible that chronic inflammation may be in part a consequence of suppressed acute inflammation
Naturopathic principles

• All forms of inflammation, acute or chronic, are purposeful
• We need to identify and address the driving factors
• We need to eliminate the cause of injury
• We need to assist the body’s own healing processes
Why Iridology?

• Iridology of the *Terrain*
• Constitutional analysis
• Assessment of relative levels of *vitality* in organs and systems
• Assessment of risk factors for *toxic encumbrance* of tissues
• Assessment of the level of *resistance* in the individual, and in individual organs
Inflammatory possibilities seen in the Iris

- General brightness – **Rheumatic** type
- Clouds and plaques indicate risk of hyperacidity
- Yellowish pigment implicates kidneys
- Dark outer zone signifies suppressed elimination (skin and kidneys)
- Dark central zone signifies inefficient digestive processes
- Prone to rheumatic and arthritic disease
Inflammatory possibilities seen in the Iris

- Focal brightness: **Lymphatic Rosary**
- Ring of white dots in periphery of iris
- Focal points of brightness also around central ring
- Connected to outer foci by “lymph strings”
- Prone to allergy (atopic immune hypervigilance) including GI affectations
Inflammatory possibilities seen in the Iris

- **Hypertonic** structures
- Tissue projects anteriorly
- Useful in dark eyes to signal inflammatory risk factors
- Here seen as section of the Collarette or Autonomic Nerve Wreath
- Signifies irritability of colon reflex – IBS, food sensitivities etc.
Inflammatory possibilities seen in the Iris

- **Dyscratic Diathesis**
- Varying distribution of secondary pigmentation
- Central heterochromia indicates potential bowel involvement
- Pigments generally reflect reduced or inefficient enzyme provision
- Health risks: soft tissue inflammatory disease (autoimmune), diabetes, cancer
Links to the gut in arthropathy

• Recently established that autoimmune disease is linked to faulty diet, pro-inflammatory foods, poor breakdown of nutriment in the GIT, gut dysbiosis and consequent autointoxication

• This is not a new idea!....
Links to the gut in arthropathy

• Arthritis and rheumatism are “...caused by acids and waste matter in the body, which eventually become solidified and lock the joint. This condition is caused and aggravated by improper diet. Some of the worst intakes are eggs, bread, milk, meat, sugar, etc.... will often accentuate an arthritic condition...”

”

Dr J R Christopher, 1976, p.3.
Arthritis in TCM

• Interruption of smooth flow of Qi through meridians
• “Painful obstruction syndrome”
• Pathogenic influences of Wind, Cold and Damp
• Accumulation of phlegm in the joints
• Sufferers are often under stress, which affects the liver, which is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi
• Blood deficiency and Qi deficiency
• Deficiency or weakness of Kidney or Spleen allows pathogenic influences
Arthritis in Ayurveda

• Primarily an excess of Ama and lack of Agni
• Poor digestion and a weakened colon lead to accumulation of undigested food and build up of waste matter
• Problems with colon, in particular, leads to accumulations in joints
• Treatment is to stimulate Agni and suppress or clear Ama
• Symptoms depend on dosha:
  – Vata – cracking joints, less swelling, dry
  – Pitta – inflammation, redness, swelling, pain even without movement
  – Kapha -Stiff and swollen, but cold and clammy; relieved by movement
More Naturopaths to check out...

• Bernard Jensen - *Tissue Cleansing through Bowel Management*

• Paavo Airola – *There is a Cure for Arthritis*
The role of Herbal Medicine

- Herbal actions and categories:
  - Anti-inflammatories
  - Anti-rheumatics
  - Immunomodulators (Adaptogens)
  - Alteratives (blood and lymph cleansers)
  - Anti-microbials
  - Vulneraries
  - Nervines, antispasmodics, analgesics
  - Circulatory stimulants
Achillea millefolium - Yarrow

Family: Asteraceae

Description: 10 to 20”, single stem, fibrous, leaves alternate, 3 to 4 inches long, rosette at the base, fern-like, dark-green, feathery appearance. Flowers arranged in flat-topped panicles with numerous small, white flower heads. Each flower resembling a daisy. Common wild flower in the UK

Part used: aerial parts

Constituents: volatile oil, sesquiterpene lactones, tannins, flavonoids, phenolic acids, coumarins

Actions: diuretic, alterative, hypotensive, diaphoretic, astringent, antiinflammatory, antiarthritic, antimicrobial, antiviral, vulnerary, hepatic, vasodilator

Energetics: bitter, spicy, neutral; lungs, liver, kidneys

Indications: colds, flu, fever (diaphoresis); hypertension and thrombosis; externally for wounds; diarrhoea and dysentery; cystitis and UTIs.; Rheumatism & arthritis

Safety: caution in pregnancy; sensitivity to Asteraceae

Dose: 2 - 4ml 3 x daily tincture (1:5 25%). Infusion, 1-2tsp dried herb to 1 cup water. Combine with peppermint and elder for colds, flu and fever
Apium graveolens - Celery seed

Family: apiaceae

Description: another typical member of this family, well known as a vegetable. seeds are very small (about 1/16th of an inch), ovoid and light brown. Commonly cultivated.

Part used: seeds

Constituents: volatile oil (2-3%), furanocoumarins, flavonoids

Actions: anti-rheumatic, anti-inflammatory, diuretic, carminative, anti-spasmodic, nervine

Energetics: spicy, warm; kidney, spleen

Indications: rheumatism, arthritis (incl. RA) and gout; aids the removal of acid waste from the body; it is also an effective urinary antiseptic (apiol content)

Safety: none reported for the seeds, but contact with celery stems has been involved in photosensitivity

Dose: 1 - 4ml 3 x daily; infuse freshly crushed seeds
Boswellia serrata - Frankincense

**Family & distribution:** Burseraceae; medium to large-sized branching tree, generally found in dry hilly areas of India, North Africa, and the Middle East. When strips of its bark are peeled away, *Boswellia serrata* exudes a gummy oleo-resin known as salai guggul that has been traditionally used in the Ayurvedic system of medicine in the treatment of arthritic conditions.

**Part used:** resin

**Constituents:** terpenoids, oils, and gum resins

**Energetics:** sweet, pungent, bitter, warm, in Ayurveda is considered to balance the Doshas

**Actions:** anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, anthelmintic, antidiarrhoeic, immunomodulator, abortifacient
Boswellia serrata - Frankincense

**Indications:** Arthritis (rheumatoid and osteo), IBD - ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease; wound cleansing. Boswellic acids have an anti-inflammatory action similar to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Boswellia inhibits pro-inflammatory mediators, specifically leukotrienes via inhibition of 5-lipoxygenase, the key enzyme involved in the biosynthesis of pro-inflammatory leukotrienes. In contrast to NSAIDs, which are well known to disrupt glycosaminoglycan synthesis, thus accelerating articular damage in arthritic conditions, boswellic acids have been shown to significantly reduce glycosaminoglycan degradation. Consequently also, long-term use of Boswellia does not lead to irritation or ulceration of the stomach. Recent studies also suggest that boswellic acids exert significant anticancer, antimicrobial and immune-potentiating effects.

**Dose and delivery:** tincture - 2-4ml TDS. Combine with Curcuma longa, Harpagophytum, Capsicum

**Safety:** no known contraindications, generally well-tolerated at standard doses; no known drug interactions
Curcuma longa - Turmeric

**Family:** Zingiberaceae;

**Distribution:** India and South-East Asia

**Description:** perennial plant with roots or tubers oblong, palmate, and deep orange inside; root-leaves about 2 feet long, lanceolate, long, petioled, tapering at each end, smooth, of a uniform green; petioles sheathing spike, erect, central, oblong, green; flowers dull yellow, three or five together

** Constituents:** Curcuminoids incl. curcumin. Volatile Oils: Sesquiterpenes, starch, volatile oil, gum, calcium chloride, fibre

**Actions:** anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, hepatic, carminative, alterative, antiviral, antifungal

**Energetics:** warm, spicy

**Indications:** arthritis, Alzheimer’s, cancer, diabetes; inhibits helicobacter pylori.

**Dose:** 4g (heaped tsp) in water; 2-4ml tincture 3 x

**Safety:** no toxicity reported; do not use for gallstones or bile duct obstruction
Curcuma longa - Turmeric

Indications (continued)
Curcumin has been shown to exhibit antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, and anticancer activities and thus has a potential against various malignant diseases, diabetes, allergies, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, and other chronic illnesses.

Arthritis: inhibits inflammation, possibly inhibiting something in the pathway of Cox-2 but not Cox-2 itself; not only does it not cause ulcers but is currently being used experimentally as a treatment for ulcers in western countries.

Alzheimers: inhibits formation of, and breaks down, Amyloid-beta oligomers nd aggregates; blood thinning: reduces clotting and clinging together of platelets

Cancer: causes apoptosis of various cancer cell types including skin, colon, forestomach, duodenum and ovary in the laboratory

Diabetes: has been shown to reduce blood sugar in rodents. Clinical trials awaited in humans.
Filipendula ulmaria - Meadowsweet

Family: Rosaceae (subfamily Spireaoideae)

Description & habitat: leaves long-stalked, pinnate, 2-5 pairs toothed leaflets 2cm in length; flowers in dense clusters, creamy white, 5 or 6 petals 2-5mm across; characteristic almondy smell when in bloom. Common wild plant in Britain and throughout Europe

Part used: aerial parts

Constituents: volatile oil containing salicylaldehyde; phenolic glycosides; flavonoids; polyphenolics; tannins; traces of coumarins and ascorbic acid

Energetics: bitter, astringent, cool; acts on liver, bladder, colon (Tierra).
Filipendula ulmaria - Meadowsweet

**Actions:** antirheumatic, analgesic, antacid, antiemetic, carminative, diaphoretic, diuretic, astringent, antispasmodic

**Indications:** inflamed and irritated gastric mucosa, GORD, heartburn and excess stomach acid, nausea on eating, peptic ulceration, children’s diarrhoea; fever, rheumatism and arthritis (salicylates).

**Safety:** avoid in people with sensitivity to salicylates, however, can safely be used as a replacement for aspirin in cases where that drug has caused loss of stomach mucosa.

**Dose & delivery:** tincture (2-4ml 3x daily), infusion (1-2 tsp dried herb to 1 pint water) or as powder (combines well with Slippery Elm for stomach complaints and ulcers).
Harpagophytum procumbens - Devil’s Claw

Botany and distribution: Pedaliaceae family, found in Southern Africa, esp. Kalahari desert. ground trailing, weedy perennial about 18 inches long with a stout central taproot growing up to two meters deep. Secondary storage tubers, resembling elongated sweet potatoes, branch off horizontally. Leaves are large, have 3-5 lobes, and are covered in white mucilaginous cells, making them appear a grayish-green color. Flowers are trumpet shaped and pink, red, or purple with a yellowish center. The fruit grows from the flower and is woody, radiates numerous long, barbed spines, and gives the plant its commonly known names.
Harpagophytum procumbens - Devil’s Claw

Part used: Tuber, root, leaf
Constituents: iridoid glycosides (harpagoside, harpagide, and procumbide), sugars, triterpenoids, phytosterols (primarily beta-sitosterol), aromatic acids (caffeic, cinnamic, and chlorogenic acids), flavonoids - luteolin and kaempferol. Harpagoside, harpagide, and procumbide, found in the tubers of the plant, appear to be the most therapeutically important constituents. Secondary storage tubers contain twice as much harpagoside as the tap root.

Energetics: bitter, cool; stomach and liver
Actions: anodyne, antirheumatic, bitter tonic, alterative, antipyretic, oxytocic, purgative, diuretic, sedative, hypoglycaemic.
Indications: arthritis and arthroses; bitter tonic for weak digestion, dyspepsia, poor appetite; liver cleansing.
Dose: as a bitter, 0.5 - 1g dried herb, 0.5 - 1ml 1:1 extract; as antirheumatic, anodyne, alterative etc, 3g or 3ml TDS
Safety: low-toxicity, generally well-tolerated, stomach upsets can occur with excessive dose; caution in diabetes where hypoglycaemic medication is used; contraindicated in gastric or peptic ulcers, contraindicated in pregnancy.
Zingiber officinale - Ginger

**Family:** Zingiberaceae

**Description & habitat:** well-known culinary ingredient, beige bulbous rhizome, yellow fibrous flesh, characteristic aromatic odour. Native to S.E.Asia, cultivated in China, India, West Indies.

**Part used:** rhizome

**Constituents:** Volatile oil- zingiberine, bisabolene, zingiberol, zingiberenol, curcumene, camphene etc; pungent principle - phenolic compounds incl. gingerols, gingerdiols, gingerdiones, dihydrogingerdiones & shogaols. Shogaols are produced by dehydration and degradation of gingerols in the drying process and are twice as pungent as gingerols - hence dried ginger more pungent than fresh.

**Energetics:** spicy, hot, pungent; heart, lung, spleen, stomach, kidney

**Actions:** stimulant, carminative, cardiovascular stimulant, warming diaphoretic, antispasmodic, emmenagogue, expectorant. herbs in formula. Dried as part of capsules formulae.
Zingiber officinale - Ginger

**Indications:** digestive insufficiency, nausea & vomiting; warms the centre/core, aiding digestion and improving assimilation; as a circulatory stimulant for cold extremities, Raynaud’s disease; delayed menstruation. added to respiratory formulae to warm, relax and stimulate. Ginger is often added to formulae as a “conductor” to lead other herbs where they are wanted; it also delays pharmacokinetics, helping to ensure other herbs in the formula are active for as long as possible.

**Dose & delivery:** usually as a tea, combined with other herbs, e.g. Fennel, Peppermint. Tincture, 1/2 - 1 ml in combination with other herbs in formula. Dried as part of capsuled formulae.

**Safety:** generally safe and easy to obtain culinary ingredient, some may find its pungency unwelcome.
Role of detoxification

- Removal of phlegm / ama
- Removal of acidic wastes
- Treat digestion to reduce phlegm formation
- Activation of liver and kidneys
- Liver governs ligaments (TCM)
- Bowel dysbiosis and autointoxication underlie autoimmune inflammatory processes
- Removal of wastes / foreign protein debris etc reduces inflammatory processes
Case Study 1: Crohn’s Disease

Right Iris

Left Iris
Program

- Soothing mucilagenous herbs for the gut lining, combined with antiseptics (Bayberry, Golden Seal) anti-inflammatories (Baical Skullcap, Turmeric) and tissue repair agent (Centella)
- Lymph cleansing, immunomodulation, stress reduction (tincture) – Echinacea, Poke root, Calendula, Schisandra, Skullcap, with bitter tonic for digestion (Gentian root)
- Colon cleanse routine once inflammation subsided
- Fully vegetarian diet
- Increase fresh produce
- Quit: gluten grains, coffee, alcohol, refined carbs and sugar
- Hydrate!!!
Case Study 2: Fibromyalgia

Right Iris

Left Iris
Program

- Alternative herbs (blood and lymph cleansers) – Dandelion root, Burdock root, Calendula flowers
- Anti-rheumatics – Devil’s Claw, Dandelion (Devil’s Claw is also a bitter tonic)
- Nervous trophorestoratives – Oatseed, Skullcap
- Circulatory stimulant – Prickly Ash bark
- Increase fresh produce
- Decrease gluten and dairy
- Quit sugar and refined carbs
- Quit black tea
- “Master Cleanser” drink first thing a.m.
Resources


Airola, P., (1968), *There is a cure for arthritis*, New York, Parker


