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Effect of Korean Red Ginseng as an adjuvant treatment for women with residual symptoms of major depression

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Abstract

Introduction: Around 20% of patients with major depression experience residual symptoms. Ginseng has shown potential antidepressant effects in some animal studies and in patients with stress-related somatic symptoms. Therefore, we investigated the effectiveness and tolerability of Korean Red Ginseng adjuvant treatment in patients with residual symptoms of major depression.

Methods: In this eight-week prospective study, 35 female outpatients aging from 18 to 65 years (45.1 ± 9.5), who were remitted from major depression with residual symptoms, were given Korean Red Ginseng at doses of 3 g/day. The Depression Residual Symptom Scale (DRSS) and Montgomery-Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) were administered to evaluate depressive symptoms. The general severity of symptoms was assessed by a clinician using the Clinical Global Impressions Scale for Severity (CGI-S). The Depression and Somatic Symptom Scale (DSSS) was also used to evaluate somatic symptoms in the subjects. This trial is registered at Clinical.gov, number [NCT01496248](#).

Results: Subjects reported significant decrease in depressive symptoms on the DRSS ($P < 0.05$) and MADRS ($P < 0.01$) decreased significantly over the eight-week period. The scores on the CGI-S, an objective measurement of symptoms, showed significant improvement in the severity of illness ($P < 0.001$). Somatic symptoms on the DSSS also attenuated significantly during the study period ($P < 0.05$).

Discussion: These results suggest that Korean Red Ginseng is efficacious as an adjuvant treatment for patients experiencing residual symptoms of major depression. Future placebo-controlled research is required to confirm our results.

Keywords: alternative treatment; depression; ginseng; residual symptom.

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