

Article

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valuable for your practice too

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'The positive power of *Crocus sativus*' valuable for your practice too

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Leo Pruimboom frequently captivates his audience with spectacular new insights into chronic diseases, the ultimate causes of disease and the path to better metabolic health. This article outlines his views about the use of *Crocus sativus* (saffron), melatonin and D-mannose in combating low-grade inflammation and the resulting disorders.



The impact of 'nerve-driven immunity'

A poor diet, a lack of exercise and excessive use of antibiotics - these are all anthropogenic factors that have a negative impact on our health. In many people, these lead to chronic low-grade inflammation. "To maintain this inflammation, the egotistic immune system needs a constant supply of energy and this energy is relentlessly plundered from our most vital organs", according to Leo.

When the weak immune response persists for long enough, the immune system even consumes substances from the nervous system, a phenomenon called 'nerve-driven immunity'. During this process, dopamine (for example) is broken down. In the brain, dopamine plays an important role in motivation, sleep, mood, attention and learning behaviour. When a (sustained) dopamine deficiency occurs, this can cause attention disorders, depression and other disorders.

Saffron as an alternative for SSRIs

Instead of calming the immune system, many mental illnesses are treated using psychotropic drugs. SSRIs (serotonin reuptake inhibitors) are used in depression. One of the problems with SSRIs is that not all patients respond equally well to them, whilst other patients do not respond at all. Another problem that is all too familiar are the many side effects.

"Crocus sativus can remedy this. Several double-blind clinical trials have shown that, at the very least, the antidepressant effect of saffron is comparable to that of SSRIs. Adverse effects of saffron are never or rarely reported."

According to Leo Pruimboom, this effect can be explained by the fact that saffron, as a reuptake inhibitor of serotonin (and noradrenaline), works in the peripheral nervous system as opposed to the central nervous system. When the reuptake in the peripheral nervous system is inhibited, the chemical balance can be restored.

Sialic acids and Trojan horses

"The difference between chimpanzees and man is actually just one small methyl group", Leo jokes. He is referring to the recently discovered difference between sialic acids of man and other mammals. People produce the variant Neu5Ac, whereas other mammals produce Neu5Gc. The terms are very similar to one another, but there is a world of difference as far as our health is concerned.

According to Leo, a mutation was responsible for us no longer being able to tolerate Neu5Gc. "Therefore, foods that contain this sialic acid have a proinflammatory effect and are responsible for an increased postprandial inflammatory response. Moreover, Neu5Gc is absorbed into all tissues in our body, including the brain."

When there are high levels of Neu5Gc in our body, we are also more vulnerable to zoonoses - diseases carried by other animals, but that mainly cause symptoms in humans, such as salmonella. The worst culprits in our diet are beef, goat's cheese, pork and lamb. Conversely, the human body recognises Neu5Ac-rich foods as being 'inherent'. Examples are chicken, turkey, cod, tuna and duck. To ensure optimum calming of the immune system, Neu5Gc-rich food should be avoided as far as possible.

The future of medicine is in the peripheral nervous system

It is, of course, fantastic to find a natural alternative for SSRIs. But it is even more fantastic to discover that behind this phenomenon is a theory that works across the entire therapeutic spectrum. According to Leo Pruimboom, this can be found in the peripheral nervous system, or the part of the human body that does not form part of the central nervous system.

Leo takes the substance D-mannose as an example. In his view, it can be used to indirectly remove foreign substances from the brain, without it being active directly in the brain. Another example is melatonin - by adding melatonin to the peripheral nervous system, melatonin is no longer taken from the brain to keep the immune response working.

According to Leo, D-mannose, melatonin and *Crocus sativus* will ultimately calm the immune system. "Only once the immune system has calmed down properly will it be able to respond again effectively to foreign substances."

In this light, Leo's view that the future of medicine is in the peripheral nervous system should come as little surprise.

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