Depression and anxiety are quite common in the general population due to genetic causes and the stresses of modern life. In response, the therapeutic medications produced by the pharmaceutical industry, while powerful, have not proven adequate solutions, since many side effects are known to occur with prescription drugs. In the natural products industry, there have been few new offerings since St. John’s Wort became a big hit in the ’90s but was later found to have many adverse effects in people using other medications.

The pervasiveness of anxiety among Americans makes it by far one of the largest disorders, afflicting 40 million adults or 18 percent of the adult population (Kessler 2005, U.S. Census 2005). The pharmaceutical support commonly prescribed is problematic for many. Tranquilizers for anxiety are addictive and can cause depression. Antidepressants are known to have numerous and unpleasant side effects such as cardiac events, fatigue, weight gain, and decreased libido, driving down their rates of compliance. But even dietary supplements have drawbacks. St. John’s Wort has unwanted interactions with prescription medications (Carlo 2001), kava was implicated in serious cases of liver damage, and 5-HTP is known to cause nausea and diarrhea (Thal 1980).

Venetron® Shows Great Potential for Healthier Outcomes

Venetron® is a new dietary ingredient for sleep and mood support that has great potential to vastly improve health outcomes when compared with what’s on the supplement market now and has been used over the last 10 to 20 years. While these other dietary supplements have limited benefits or unpleasant side effects, Venetron® is an herbal extract that has potent effects on brain function based on well-known and safe flavonoid phytocompounds, and has not been shown to have significant adverse events (Xie 2012).

Venetron® is derived from Apocynum venetum L., a shrub of the dogbane family growing extensively in China’s mid- to northwestern regions. It has long been used in traditional Chinese medicine and in the Uighur traditional medicine of the western China plateau near Tibet (Xie 2012). The first recorded use of A. venetum was in the ancient Chinese herbal book Jiu-Huang-Ben-Cao of the Ming Dynasty in the early 15th century, which described the medicinal use of the leaves and tender stems served as both a food and a tea. Another source, The Compendium of Materia Medica, which also was written in the 15th century, states that the herb eliminates “dampness” (water retention) through diuresis. In modern times, A. venetum is known as Luobuma in China, and the Chinese Pharmacopoeia recommends it for calming the liver, soothing nerves, and clearing heat (inflammation). It is also listed there for treating neurasthenia, palpitation, insomnia, edema with frequent urination, hypertension, and nephritic edema (Pharma. 2005).

Biochemical studies have shown that A. venetum possesses lipid-peroxidation-inhibiting activity (Nishibe 1994), hepatoprotective effects (Xiong 2000), and anti-aging activities (Yokozawa 2001). Modern pharmacological research has discovered many potent physiological effects in Luobuma, including anti-hypertensive, cardiotonic, hepatoprotective, anti-oxidant, lipid-lowering, antidepressant and anti-anxiety actions — most of which are believed to be attributed to the flavonoids content (Xie 2012).

A Potent Mix of Flavonoids, a Reassuring Absence of Side Effects

Venetron®, a potent and proprietary standardized extract of Apocynum venetum L., contains consistent levels of bioactive flavonoids, including hyperoside, isoquercitrin, malonylhyperoside, and quercitrin, some of which overlap with those found in St. John’s Wort. The preparation is standardized to contain more than 4 percent of combined hyperoside and isoquercitrin, which are believed to be the important actives for the antidepressant effect. Studies comparing Venetron® with the conventional tricyclic antidepressant imipramine in a forced swimming test with mice found antidepressant effects (Butterweck 2001). And in contrast to St. John’s Wort, Venetron® does not contain hypericin, the phytocompound that is a known risk for causing photosensitivity reactions. In addition, St. John’s contains hyperforin, which interacts unfavorably with medications for blood pressure and other conditions (Narhstedt 2010).

A flavonoid in Venetron® known as kaempferol has been shown to be an important anxiety-reducing active (Grundmann 2009). Kaempferol given orally to mice at doses of 0.02 and 0.08 mg/kg (equivalent to 30 and 120 mg/kg, respectively, of Venetron®) caused a significant increase of time spent in the open area of a maze, indicating more bold exploratory behavior and less anxiety. Kaempferol is degraded by intestinal microbes to para-hydroxyphenylacetic acid and is thought to contribute to the anxiolytic activity of Venetron® (Vissiennon 2012).
The anti-anxiety activity of Venetron® was tested in mice in an open space and by balancing on a platform with a comparison control to the anti-anxiety drug diazepam, one hour before the test. Results at doses of 30 and 125 mg/kg compared with diazepam showed significant increase in the percentage of time spent on the open arms extending from the platform. Further pharmacological investigations of the neurotransmitter involved showed Venetron® produced its anxiolytic action through the GABA-ergic system (Grundmann, 2007).

In a double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover study of 12 students who underwent a stress-inducing mental task, enhanced Venetron® (a proprietary 1:1 blend of Apocynum venetum extract and highly bioavailable form of GABA) at a dosage of 50 mg/day showed a significant reduction in a stress marker known as salivary chromogranin A (CgA) secretion, which has been found to indicate psychological stress in humans exposed to a cognitive task (Yoto 2009; Kanamaru 2006).

The antidepressant activity of Venetron® was tested in immobilized rats in the range of 15–250 mg/kg/d, which was compared with imipramine at 15 mg/kg/d (antidepressant effects of A. venetum leaves in the forced swimming test; Seo 2003). Imipramine works similarly through modulating the serotonin and norepinephrine synaptic pathways. In addition, the minimum effective dosage of Venetron® was 15 mg/kg, 33 times less than the reported value of St. John’s Wort extract of 500 mg/kg, suggesting that Venetron® is a significantly more potent antidepressant in animal studies than St. John’s Wort extract (Butterweck, Simbrey 2003).

A Spectrum of Efficacious Results in Clinical Trials

In clinical trials with subjects having mild depression, and from case reports of women treated for premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and depression, Venetron® at a dosage of only 50 mg per day helped improve symptoms of depression, including different types of insomnia characterized by awakenings in the middle of the night or in the early morning. The mechanism of action for the antidepressant effect is thought to be related to increased serotonin levels found in the subjects’ platelets (KGK Synergize). Venetron® had a higher number of adverse events rated as milder (versus more severe) compared with placebo. These results suggested that use of Venetron® by individuals with depression is safe and with very few side effects (KGK Synergize). Furthermore, no side effect was found in healthy individuals at the dosage of 50 mg/d for the first eight weeks and 150 mg/d for the next four weeks (Yang 2009).

In 39 individuals with mild depression, which included symptoms of anxiety, Venetron® was tested in a double-blind, randomized trial of 50 mg per day versus placebo given as two 25 mg tablets per day at separate times over eight weeks (KGK Synergize). There were 20 subjects in the Venetron® group and 19 in the control (placebo) group. Global scores of depression and blood samples for serotonin levels for both groups were measured at baseline and after eight weeks. The results were assessed against the 17-item HAM-D rating scale, which evaluates depressed mood, vegetative and cognitive symptoms of depression, and anxiety symptoms.

After eight weeks of treatment, 40 percent of the subjects in the Venetron® group showed a greater than 10-point decrease in HAM-D scores. It should also be noted that 50 percent of the Venetron® group showed a decrease in HAM-D scores of 50 percent or greater. Also, 60 percent of the Venetron® group had a HAM-D score of 8 or less by week eight. Other symptoms that showed significant improvements within the Venetron® group included middle- and late-night insomnia, work and activities, and somatic anxiety between baseline and week eight.

In the Venetron® group, 50 percent of the subjects had increased serotonin concentrations, demonstrating biochemical evidence of improvement (increase of 67%; 10.6 ± 6.3 ng/ml to 17.7 ± 7.2 ng/ml). And 35 percent of the subjects in this group showed an increase of at least 20 percent.

In another clinical trial using the Sheehan Disability Scale (SDS) to measure depression, very impressive results were observed. Each person took two 25 mg tablets a day for 14 days. SDS scores improved for all subjects reporting minimal to mild depression as well as moderate to severe depression. The mean measurement significantly declined to the normal range after ingestion stopped (unpublished data).

Case studies have also shown very good results in patients with depressive PMS disorders and in younger and older depressed patients (unpublished data). In one 29-year-old woman, 50 mg of Venetron® a day for one month reduced melancholy and
overeating associated with PMS. In a 39-year-old with PMS, 25 mg of Venetron® taken for two weeks before menses over three months improved emotional symptoms such as irritability and depression. A 36-year-old man, given 50 mg a day for six months, showed improvements in concentration and was more optimistic. A 55-year-old woman given 50 mg a day showed a decrease in fatigue and grief. Two older males, one 66 and the other 75 years old, using 50 mg a day after two weeks, had decreases in frequency of waking up throughout the night and had deeper sleep.

For Sufferers, an Option with Proven Advantages

Venetron® is a new anxiety-reducing and antidepressant botanical extract product that has demonstrated many advantages over current product offerings. Multiple studies of the active ingredient in Venetron®, standardized extract of Luobuma leaf (Apocynum venetum L.), based on pharmacological data, human clinical studies, clinical case studies, and safety background, all demonstrate its safety and efficacy for insomnia, anxiety, depression, and PMS.

References

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Venetron® Overview