



British Association of Dermatologists

PRESS RELEASE

Resin from spruce tree can help skin disease

For immediate release,

A traditional Finnish folk medicine concoction of resin salve from the Norwegian spruce tree mixed with salt-free butter has been found to be effective at treating severe pressure ulcers, new research in the *British Journal of Dermatology* will reveal.

Resin salve treatment has been used for centuries in Finnish Lapland as self-care in treatment of wounds and skin ulcers. However, until now reports on its efficacy have been merely anecdotal and no formal testing has been done.

A team of scientists in Finland therefore conducted a study of 22 patients with a total of 29 severe pressure ulcers – open sores caused by pressure or friction and common in people who have reduced mobility, perhaps due to long term bed-rest or old age.

They compared the effect of traditional resin salve with a control of 'sodium carboxymethylcellulose hydrocolloid polymer', an accepted treatment for pressure ulcers. Both treatments were accompanied by dressings, which were changed either daily or every three days depending on the level of infection.

During the six month treatment period, all ulcers healed in 92 percent of the resin group, compared to just 44 percent of the control group. Also, the speed of ulcer healing was significantly faster in the resin group. Furthermore, the resin salve was found to be more effective at reducing the size and healing the ulcer as well as reducing the bacteria present.

Interestingly, the superior effect of the resin salve only showed after three months of treatment. The team therefore think that as well as its antimicrobial qualities, the resin salve may also induce cell and tissue regeneration, suggesting it does not just fight infection but actively encourages healing as well.

According to the study, the resin has significant antibacterial activity against certain skin bacteria, including MRSA, and also has antifungal properties.

Dr Arno Sipponen, one of the researchers, said: "This study has documented a statistically significantly better healing rate of severe pressure ulcers among patients who were treated with a traditional resin salve than among those who were treated conventionally with a 'modern' option considered to be the most available treatment at present."

[m/f...]

[cont 2/2]

Nina Goad of the British Association of Dermatologists said: "Pressure ulcers can be very difficult to treat, and cause great pain and discomfort to the patient. The disorder basically involves having a large open wound that will not heal and can become infected.

"Unfortunately current treatments aren't always successful, so any advances that could lead to new therapies are worth investigating. It will be interesting to see what larger, follow-up studies into resin reveal."

These ulcers particularly affect people with mobility problems and people with poor diets who are malnourished. Diabetes, certain drugs and smoking also increase the risk.

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

1. If using this information, please ensure you mention that the study is being released in the *British Journal of Dermatology*, the official publication of the British Association of Dermatologists.

2. For more information please contact: Nina Goad, British Association of Dermatologists, Communications Manager, Phone: 0207 391 6355, Email: nina@bad.org.uk, Website: www.bad.org.uk

3. Articles in the BJD can be viewed online: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/BJD>

Study details: "Beneficial effect of resin salve in treatment of severe pressure ulcers@ a prospective, randomized and controlled multicentre trial." A. Sipponen, J.J. Jokinen*, P. Sipponen¹, A. Papp², S. Sarna³, J. Lohi ‡; Dept of Surgery, Rheumatism Foundation Hospital, Heinola, Finland; *Dept of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Helsinki University Hospital, Finland; ¹Division of Pathology, Helsinki University Hospital, Finland; ²BC Professional Firefighters' Burn Unit, Vancouver General Hospital, Canada; ³Dept of Public Health, University of Helsinki, Finland; ‡Rovaniem Health Care Centre, Finland. DOI: 10.1111/J.1365-2133.2008.08461.X

The British Association of Dermatologists is the central association of practising UK dermatologists. Our aim is to continually improve the treatment and understanding of skin disease.

Blackwell Publishing is a leading society publisher, partnering with 665 medical, academic and professional societies. Blackwell publishes over 800 journals and has over 6,000 books in print. In February 2007, Blackwell Publishing officially merged with John Wiley & Sons, Inc's Scientific, Technical and Medical business. For more information on Blackwell Publishing, please visit www.blackwellpublishing.com or www.blackwell-synergy.com.