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Complementary and alternative medicine in pediatric allergic disorders

Xiu-Min Li, MD.

Correspondence to Xiu-Min Li, MD, Department of Pediatrics, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, One Gustave L Levy Place, Pediatrics Box 1198, New York, NY 10029, USA. Tel: 212 241 9722, Fax:212 426 1902,

Purpose of review

Allergic disorders represent serious public health problem in children. The chronic nature of these diseases and the fear of known side effects of synthetic drugs influence many families to seek complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). This review focuses on TCM herbal products, acupuncture for treating pediatric allergies.

Recent findings

Given the general safety profile, reputed efficacy, TCM are well received by the general population. However, compared to the long human use history and popularity of use of TCM, research into its efficacy and safety is still in infancy. Recent 2-3 years there are more controlled studies of TCM for allergic asthma, allergic rhinitis. **Several publications including ours indicate that some TCM herbal formulas are safe and produced some levels of efficacy. Some herbal formula also showed beneficial immunomodulatory effects.** Several preclinical studies demonstrated that the food allergy herbal formula-2 (FAHF-2) was effective in protecting against peanut anaphylaxis in animal model. Two TCM products have entered the clinical trials in the US for treating asthma and food allergy respectively. Both of these trials include children.

Summary

Recently studies indicate that TCM therapy including herbal medicines and acupuncture for allergic disorders in children is safe. There are also promising clinical and objective improvement. More controlled clinical studies are encouraged.

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8 W Chestnut
Chicago, IL 60610

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