Priyanka Roy

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St John’s Wort

The common name "St John's wort" can be used to refer to any Hypericum genus species. The scientific name is Hypericum perforatum. FDA classifies St. John's wort as a dietary supplement. Product is available in capsules, powder, tablets, herb oil and tinctures (Hypericum perforatum, 2019). St. John's wort is native to Europe but is found on North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Eastern Asia. ("St. John's Wort: Uses, Side Effects, Interactions, Dosage, and Warning", 2019)

St. John's wort is most commonly used for depression and conditions that sometimes surround depression such as anxiety, fatigue, loss of appetite and sleeping problems. The oil from St. John Wort treats bruises, swelling, muscle pain, first-degree burns, cuts, bug bites, and nerve pain. St. John's wort was tested for exhaustion, help with stop-smoking, fibromyalgia, chronic tiredness syndrome (CFS), migraine, other types of headaches, and irritable bowel syndrome. Certain applications include heart palpitations, moodiness and other menopause symptoms, ADHD, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and seasonal affective disorder (SAD). ("St. John's Wort: Uses, Side Effects, Interactions, Dosage, and Warning", 2019).

Preparations vary considerably in chemical content and quality and can be standardized to hyperforin (usually 3% to 5%) or hypericin (usually 0.3%). Clinical trials testing the effectiveness of St John's wort in depression have generally used 900 mg of extract daily in 3 divided doses for periods of up to 1 year (range 600 to 1200 mg/day) in both short-term and ongoing therapy treatments (Drug Information Handbook for Dentistry, 2019)

Possible adverse effects include dry mouth, dizziness, constipation, and other GI symptoms and confusion. There may also be photosensitization. Certain potential unusual adverse reactions include mania induction and effects on the reproductive abilities of both men and women. It is contraindicated for use with cyclosporine, tacrolimus irinotecan and imatinib mesylate, protease inhibitors and nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors in HIV treatment (Drug Information Handbook for Dentistry, 2019)

The most common antidepressants prescribed by doctors are called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). Ingredients in St. John’s wort appear to increase serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline. SSRIs help to release more serotonin by stopping the mechanism of reuptake. ("The most commonly prescribed type of antidepressant", 2019). St. John's wort is attractive to the consumer due to its easy availability and because of the different uses that are labelled on the product. Consumers could base the comparison on the fact that both St John’s Wort and prescribed drugs for depression work in a similar manner i.e. by increasing the levels of chemical messengers in the brain.

As health educators, one should have knowledge about popular natural products and their common adverse effects, however one can also ask for a consultation with the patient’s general physician to verify the product’s effects and usage.  In the case of a special condition of a patient, a dental hygienist must be well aware before suggesting any treatment plans. However, in all other cases where the patient is taking a natural product, a hygienist can propose a treatment plan. St John’s wort’s adverse reactions are usually mild; however, one should ask the patient to be mindful of any potential adverse reactions like dry mouth, dizziness, constipation.

In conclusion, a dental hygienist should be very mindful in dealing with a patient that has a special condition, i.e. pregnancy, cancer or a rare disease; it is highly recommended that they verify the interaction of the treatment plan of the patients with the medications already in use. The hygienist should generally encourage patients to report any abnormal changes in the body, so that a hygienist may make changes to the treatment plan.

Reference:

St. John's Wort: Uses, Side Effects, Interactions, Dosage, and Warning. (2019). Retrieved 17 November 2019, from https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-329/st-johns-wort

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