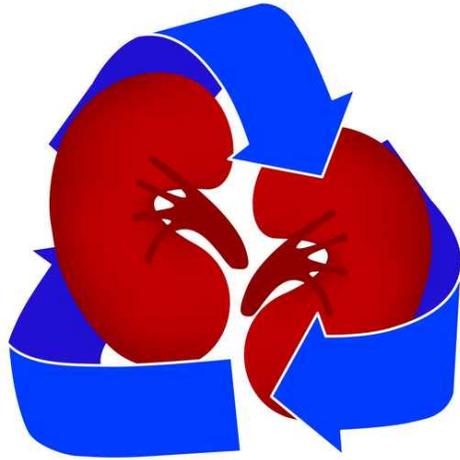


Ancient medicine found to help reduce chances of kidney failure for diabetics

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A team of researchers in Taiwan said they have determined that an ancient Chinese medicinal compound, known as six-flavor tea pills, can help reduce the risk of kidney failure in patients with type 2 diabetes.

In a study conducted among people with type 2 diabetes, it was found that the risk of kidney failure was 31 percent lower among those who had been taking the traditional Chinese medicine than those who had not been receiving such treatment, Lai Jung-nien (賴榮年), head of the research team at the National Yang-Ming University Institute of Traditional Medicine in Taipei, said earlier this week.

The study used data from the National Health Insurance Research Database and examined the treatment of type 2 diabetes among 40,163 patients in Taiwan between 1997 and 2008, Lai said at a Chinese Medical Association conference in Taipei.

Among the 40,163 patients, 15,405 suffered kidney failure and 1,346 of them received dialysis over the 10-year period, Lai added.

The researchers found that patients who had been taking the traditional Chinese medicine prescription as well as Western medicine did not require dialysis until a year after the patients who had not been taking the formula, he said.

In the case of patients who had been taking modern Western medicine along with traditional Chinese medicine that did not include six-flavor tea pills, dialysis was delayed for about six months, Lai said.

He said that over the 10-year period, 90 percent of the type 2 diabetes patients in the study were treated with Western medicine, and those who visited traditional Chinese medicine practitioners were mostly prescribed the compound, a patented formula also known as liuwei dihuang wan (六味地黃丸).

Traditional Chinese medicine practitioners frequently recommend that type 2 diabetes patients to regularly perform ba duan jin exercise — a form of medical qigong — and refrain from eating frozen foods, as extremely cold foods are believed to be harmful to the kidney.

Lai said he hoped that the study would change bias against traditional Chinese medicine, as it proves that some chronic diseases can be effectively treated through the combined use of traditional Chinese and modern medicine.

Liuwei dihuang wan, a compound made of six different herbs, is frequently prescribed by traditional Chinese medicine practitioners for the treatment of type 2 diabetes.

The study was published in volume 156 of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology in October last year, Lai said.