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Effects of Saw Palmetto on Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms From Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia

Michael Trimble
University of North Dakota

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Abstract

- Benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH) is common in older males and can cause lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS).
- Saw Palmetto, an herbal supplement, is normally implemented as an alternative medication to treat lower urinary tract symptoms associated with BPH.
- The review of literature evaluated studies comparing the effects and outcomes of Saw Palmetto versus commonly prescribed medications such as antiinflammatory agents.
- There are conflicting studies indicating Saw Palmetto’s efficacy on lower urinary tract symptoms and reduction of BPH.
- Saw Palmetto has no side effects, and it is available at a low cost when compared to prescribed medications for BPH.

Introduction

- The objective for providers is to prescribe or recommend a medication that is effective and affordable with low side effects for LUTS associated with BPH.
- Mild LUTS are treatable with prescribed medications such as antiinflammatory agents.
- An alternative phytotherapeutic option, Saw Palmetto, is also available which may be effective on LUTS associated with BPH, may be financially beneficial and may have less side effects.

Statement of the Problem

- Few studies have researched the outcomes of Saw Palmetto.
- Many patients have concerns with increased cost and side effects with prescribed medications.
- Some religious or cultural concerns prohibit use of prescribed medications, so preferences for viable alternative phytotherapeutic options may exist.

Research Questions

- Is Saw Palmetto, an herbal supplement, an effective phytotherapeutic alternative to commonly prescribed medications in treating LUTS associated with BPH?
- Is Saw Palmetto cost effective?
- Is there less toxicity associated with Saw Palmetto in comparison to prescribed medications?
- Is Saw Palmetto a viable alternative phytotherapeutic option among culturally/religiously diverse patients?

Discussion

- Lipidosterol extracts from Saw Palmetto decrease prostatic cellular viability and down regulate gene expression affecting prostatic cellular apoptosis, proliferation pathways and inflammation pathways which reduce the pathogenesis of BPH (Sarib et al., 2013).
- Prostaplex (Saw Palmetto) has a short term improvement on LUTS, but does not affect prostate hyperplasia (Shi et al., 2008).
- Conversely, Iglesias-Gato et al., 2011, found that a minimum concentration of 50 μg/mL of Prostasan (Saw Palmetto) inhibited prostatic hyperplasia.
- Saw Palmetto at a dosage of 960 mg did not reduce LUTS associated with BPH versus placebo. (Barry et al., 2011).
- There were no statistically significant differences with the AUASI scores and the peak urinary flow rates between the Saw Palmeto and placebo groups, so Saw Palmetto did not reduce LUTS associated with BPH. (Bent et al., 2006).
- Saw Palmeto does not produce any side effects when taken for up to 18 months. (Avin et al., 2013).
- Saw Palmetto at a dosage of 960 mg does not cause side effects. (Barry et al., 2011).
- The combination of Tumsulosin with Saw Palmetto may cause postural hypotension, fatigue, rhinitis, ejaculation disorders, decreased libido, and dry mouth. There were no adverse effects observed with Saw Palmetto alone. (Hihi et al., 2006).

Table 3 Summary of adverse effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Saw Palmetto (N = 20)</th>
<th>Saw + TAMS (N = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azo</td>
<td>20 (100%) 8 (40%) 17 (85%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhinitis</td>
<td>– 2 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthenia</td>
<td>– 2 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fattiness</td>
<td>– 2 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postural hypotension</td>
<td>– 2 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried mouth</td>
<td>– 2 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in sexual desire</td>
<td>– 3 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejaculation disorders</td>
<td>– 3 –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hihi et al., 2006)

- Prostaplex (Saw Palmetto) was a preferred option because of low cost and lower toxicity compared to prescription medication. (Shi et al., 2008).
- Alternative phytotherapeutic agents are increasingly implemented because patients are unsatisfied with prescribed medications and because of diverse cultural/religious values and beliefs. (Hihi et al., 2006).

Applicability to Clinical Practice

- There are conflicting studies indicating Saw Palmetto’s efficacy on LUTS and reducing BPH.
- Prostaplex has a short term improvement on LUTS, but does not affect BPH.
- Prostasan may inhibit BPH.
- Saw Palmetto combined with Selenium and Lycopene may have a greater effect on BPH than Saw Palmetto alone.
- Saw Palmetto is inexpensive and has no side effects.
- It is reasonable, with patients that have resisted or discontinued prescription medications, to discuss the option of Saw Palmetto although it may or may not lower LUTS and/or reduce BPH.

References


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