



Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Herbal Medicines for Dementia

Professor Alan Bensoussan and Dr Dennis Chang from the Centre for Complementary Medicine (CompleMed) are collaborating with international researchers from the China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Xiyuan Hospital China, to improve the treatment of vascular dementia using herbal medicine, through a Department of Education, Science and Training Australia-China Fund grant. The project is supported by the *International Science Linkages* established under the Australian Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* innovation statement.



'Vascular dementia – a progressive brain disease - accounts for nearly twenty per cent of all dementia cases and affects over 200,000 Australians' says Professor Bensoussan. 'The progressive reduction in cognitive function of people suffering the disease represents a significant health and economic burden to Australia, with about 1000 new cases diagnosed each week. More and more patients and practitioners are using herbal medicines to treat this pervasive health problem. This project will examine a three herb formulation used to treat vascular dementia, specifically, to evaluate how much of these herbs are taken up into the blood stream.'

A recently completed clinical trial has demonstrated the positive effects of the formulation on vascular dementia. Furthering this collaborative research, this project will strengthen methods for assessing the composition and effectiveness of complex herbal medicines. As part of this research the team will develop and share innovative analytical methods with the international collaborators to enable them to identify small amounts of active chemical compounds in herbal preparations.

In addition to gaining valuable insights about treatment options for vascular dementia, the knowledge gained in the project will be applied broadly to the study of pharmacokinetics (how active chemicals are taken up and used in animals and humans), thus improving the safety and effectiveness of herbal medicines. More specifically, the results will lead to a better understanding of the usage, dosage constraints and potential drug interactions of herbal medicines in dementia patients.

Project Title: Developing bioavailability methods in herbal medicines

Funding has been set at: \$53,790

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