



Natural Standard

The Authority on Integrative Medicine

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Natural Standard provides high-quality, evidence-based information about complementary and alternative therapies, diets, exercise and nutrition. For more information, please visit www.naturalstandard.com.

Wall Street Journal Interviews **Natural Standard**



Natural Standard Chief Editor Dr. Catherine Ulbricht helped the *Wall Street Journal* separate fact from fiction in a recent news article about the Chinese herb astragalus.

The article, "*Rooting Out the Facts On an Immune Booster*," describes the potential immune-stimulating effects of astragalus. Although many manufacturers claim that it enhances immune function, there is a lack of evidence that these effects improve health in humans.

The article states that "scientific studies, mostly in Asia, have found the herb boosts the immune system in humans, but Western studies are scant." According to a **Natural Standard** Research Collaboration evidence-based systematic review, the immune-boosting properties of astragalus received a grade "C" on a scale from A to F. "A grade of C means unclear or conflicting scientific information," Dr. Ulbricht, senior attending pharmacist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and a co-founder of **Natural Standard** told the *Wall Street Journal*.

As with other therapies, astragalus may be unsafe for some individuals. The article points out that "astragalus isn't recommended for people with autoimmune diseases such as lupus or multiple sclerosis, where activating the immune system could be harmful." People who are allergic to members of the pea family may also be allergic to astragalus. Like other herbs, check with your doctor before using it with other medicines.

To read the full article, please [click here](#).

To schedule an expert interview or book signing with Dr. Ulbricht, please e-mail questions@naturalstandard.com.

For more information about astragalus, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Foods, Herbs and Supplements](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

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Complimentary Webinars

Natural Standard is offering a series of upcoming complimentary webinars on integrative medicine. **Natural Standard** offers these impartial webinars as an informational public service. All webinars are recorded and archived at www.naturalstandard.com.



To comment on a recent webinar or to suggest future webinar topics, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

UCONN Enduring CE Program: Scientific Evidence on Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA)

Presented by: Chief Editor Catherine Ulbricht, PharmD and UCONN Alum

Using the **Natural Standard** Grading Scale™ as a guide, Dr. Ulbricht will discuss the available evidence of effectiveness for docosahexaenoic (DHA), an omega-3 fatty acid.

- 1 CE credit for Pharmacists and Technicians
- Launching in June
- To log in, please visit www.naturalstandard.com/webinars.

The Food Tree: The Food Pyramid revamped. A Rational Approach to Nutrition.

Presented by: Ranveig Elvebakk, MD

An innovator in nutrition, Dr. Ranveig Elvebakk specializes in treating diabetes and other metabolic illnesses with nutrition. Her book, *The Food Tree*, debunks diets and food pyramids, raising nutrition to a scientific level that individuals can understand and achieve.

- Complimentary access: July 1-31, 2009
- To log in, please visit www.naturalstandard.com/webinars.

Comfrey may Improve Back Pain



An ointment made from comfrey root extract may significantly reduce acute upper and lower back pain, according to a new study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) is a perennial herb native to Europe and Asia. The herb has traditionally been applied to the skin for inflammation, pain and wound healing, and has been taken by mouth for digestive, breathing and gynecological conditions.

In the study, 120 adults with back pain were randomly assigned to receive either 4 grams of the comfrey-containing ointment Kytta-Salbe® or placebo three times daily for five days. The participants' pain was measured using a visual analogue scale.

By the end of the study, pain intensity improved by about 95 percent in the comfrey group compared to just 37 percent in the placebo group. The authors also noted that pain was relieved quickly, usually in less than one hour after the ointment was applied to the skin.

The authors concluded that "comfrey root extract showed a remarkably potent and clinically relevant effect in reducing acute back pain." These findings support several earlier human studies that suggest comfrey-containing creams may reduce inflammation and pain associated with sprains and muscle injuries.

Although comfrey has been traditionally used both orally and topically, recent evidence suggests that the herb may contain cancer-causing compounds and may lead to liver damage. As a result, various countries, including the United States, have asked companies to remove oral comfrey products from the market, and topical products are required to advise consumers not to use on broken skin. Other countries, such as Germany, allow topical comfrey products with a label including the maximal daily allowable levels of pyrrolizidine alkaloids of 100 micrograms and maximal use over six weeks per year.

For more information about integrative therapies for pain, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Comparative Effectiveness](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

References:

1. Giannetti BM, Staiger C, Bulitta M, et al. Efficacy and safety of a Comfrey root extract ointment in the treatment of acute upper or low back pain: results of a double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled, multi-centre trial. *Br J Sports Med.* 2009 May 21. [View Abstract](#)
2. **Natural Standard:** The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.

NACDS Conference

Leading retailers and suppliers of healthcare products, pharmacy technology, software and innovative goods and services are invited to attend this year's [National Association of Chain Drug Stores \(NACDS\) Pharmacy & Technology Conference](#).



The event will be held August 8-11, 2009, at the Boston Convention Center and will feature more than 130 retail companies who collectively represent more than 80,000 retail outlets and more than \$200 billion in annual sales for prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs and home healthcare products

The conference will also include a "Meet the Rx Market" program, which is designed to bring together retailers and suppliers for a series of eight-minute appointments focusing on new products and services. Here, attendees will have the opportunity to see the latest products, services and technical innovations in an efficient format.

Solution-oriented educational sessions will cover the latest on state-of-the-art pharmacy operations, clinical issues, distribution and marketing. Several topics, including drug diversion, generic biopharmaceuticals and counterfeit drugs, will be discussed during these informative sessions.

Natural Standard will be among the many exhibitors at the event. Attendees can enter to win a complimentary subscription to the [Journal of Dietary Supplements](#) or a copy of [Natural Standard Medical Condition Reference: An Integrative Approach](#), [Natural Standard Herb & Supplement Reference Book: Evidence-based Clinical Reviews](#) or [Natural Standard Herb & Supplement Handbook: The Clinical Bottom Line](#).

If you would like **Natural Standard** to post your event(s) online, please e-mail news@naturalstandard.com.

Benefits of Natural Birthing Classes Unclear



Learning relaxation and breathing techniques during pregnancy may not reduce the likelihood of needing an epidural or Caesarian section, researchers report in *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*.

The Swedish study included 1,087 pregnant women and 1,064 of their partners. The participants were randomly assigned to attend four natural birthing classes or standard care classes. The natural birthing classes taught relaxation and breathing techniques, while the standard care classes emphasized pain relief and provided information about childbirth and parenting, modeled after the standard Swedish

Antenatal Education Programme. The two-hour sessions began during the third trimester of pregnancy.

The number of women who requested pain-relieving medication during childbirth was similar in both groups, with just over half receiving epidurals. The number of vaginal and Caesarian deliveries was also similar between groups, although slightly more women in the natural childbirth group required the use of forceps or a ventouse. After the delivery, both groups reported similar rates of parental stress and satisfaction with the childbirth experience.

However, the authors note that additional research is needed to determine if results would be similar in other countries where prenatal preparation classes may be different.

Other integrative therapies have been suggested as beneficial before or during childbirth. For instance, some research suggests that water aerobics may help reduce pain during delivery. It has also been suggested that giving birth in water may reduce labor pain, duration of labor, perineal damage to the mother and birth complications.

For more information about natural childbirth techniques, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter [Natural Standard's](#) blog.

References:

1. Bergstrom M, Kieler H, Waldenstrom U. Effects of natural childbirth preparation versus standard antenatal education on epidural rates, experience of childbirth and parental stress in mothers and fathers: a randomised controlled multicentre trial. 2009 May. [View Abstract](#)
2. **Natural Standard:** The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.



Green Tea for Leukemia

Mayo Clinic researchers have found that a compound in green tea called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) may have beneficial effects in patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL).

CLL is one of four types of leukemia, which affects the blood and bone marrow. CLL typically progresses more slowly than other types of leukemia, and it is most common among adults who are 50 years of age or older.



In the Phase I clinical trial, 33 adults with CLL received eight different doses of Polyphenon E, a substance made from decaffeinated green tea that contains EGCG. Participants received 400-2,000 milligrams of Polyphenon E twice daily for one month.

According to the results, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, the supplement was well tolerated, and high doses helped decrease the white blood cells counts in one-third of patients with CLL, indicating cancer regression. Additionally, most people who had enlarged lymph nodes at the start of the study experienced at least a 50 percent reduction in lymph node size.

The research is now undergoing a second phase of clinical testing in which CLL patients will each receive 2,000 milligrams of Polyphenon E twice daily.

For more information about green tea please visit [Natural Standard's Foods, Herbs & Supplements](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter [Natural Standard's](#) blog.

References:

1. **Natural Standard:** The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.
2. Shanafelt TD, Call TG, Zent CS, et al. Phase I Trial of Daily Oral Polyphenon E in Patients With Asymptomatic Rai Stage 0 to II Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. *J Clin Oncol*. 2009 May 26. [View Abstract](#)



Aspirin Therapy Questioned

A new research analysis published in the *Lancet* questions traditional



recommendations for daily, low-dose aspirin therapy.

Doctors often recommend aspirin as a preventative measure against stroke and heart attack in people who are either at risk or have histories of these conditions. However, according to the meta-analysis, the potential risks of bleeding might outweigh the benefits if the person has not already had a heart attack or stroke.

The researchers analyzed data from six "primary prevention" studies that tested the effects of aspirin in 95,000 people with low-to-average risk factors for heart disease. They also analyzed 16 "secondary prevention" studies, which included 17,000 high-risk patients who already had a heart attack or stroke.

In both the low- and high-risk groups, the risk of non-fatal heart attack decreased by about 20 percent. However, in the lower-risk group, aspirin did not improve the risk of stroke or death from vascular problems. Additionally, aspirin therapy was linked to a statistically significant 33 percent increased risk of internal bleeding. This risk, according to the authors, outweighed the potential benefits.

In contrast, the analysis suggests that the benefits outweighed the risk of serious adverse effects in people who already had a heart attack or stroke. The authors concluded that only people with previous histories of heart attack or stroke should be advised to take a daily aspirin.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that people talk to their doctors before beginning aspirin therapy because the risks and benefits vary for each person.

In a related study, researchers report that injections of nano-silver particles helped prevent blood clots in mice. The silver worked by preventing platelet surface proteins in the blood from clumping together. Unlike other anticoagulants, the nano-silver did not affect other proteins in the blood that help form clots, which may translate into a reduce risk of uncontrolled bleeding. However because this study was done in animals, it is unclear if this therapy would be safe and effective in humans. Additional clinical research is warranted.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

For more information about stroke and heart attack, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Medical Conditions](#) database.

References:

1. Baigent C. Aspirin in the primary and secondary prevention of vascular disease: collaborative meta-analysis of individual participant data from randomised trials. May 2009 373(9678):1849-1860. [View Abstract](#)
2. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.
3. Shrivastava S, Bera T, Singh SK, et al. Characterization of Antiplatelet Properties of Silver Nanoparticles. ACS Nano. 2009 May. [View Abstract](#)

Is Pollution Linked to Liver Disease?

A new study suggests that environmental pollution may be associated with liver disease in the United States. The new data supports earlier evidence linking liver disease to highly exposed chemical workers.

The researchers analyzed data from the 2003-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). NHANES is a large nationally representative survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The researchers examined the potential association between long-term, low-level exposure to 111 common pollutants (including lead, mercury, PCBs and pesticides) and unexplained liver disease in adults. The specific pollutants were detectable in at least 60 percent of the 4,500 study participants. Liver injury was indicated in people with elevated alanine transaminase (ALT) liver enzyme levels.



"Our study found that greater than one in three U.S. adults had liver disease, even after excluding those with traditional risk factors such as alcoholism and viral hepatitis," Matthew Cave, MD, assistant professor, department of medicine, division of gastroenterology and hepatology at the University of Louisville, said in a statement. "Our study shows that some of these cases may be attributable to environmental pollution, even after adjusting for obesity, which is another major risk factor for liver disease."

However, this study does not prove that environmental pollution causes liver disease. It only suggests that they may be associated with each other.

The researchers plan to study the potential additive effects of environmental pollutants on liver disease in children and adults with risk factors, including obesity, viral hepatitis and alcoholism.

The study was presented during Digestive Disease Week® 2009 (DDW®), an international gathering of physicians and researchers in the fields of gastroenterology, hepatology, endoscopy and gastrointestinal surgery.

For more information about environmental pollution, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Environmental Resources](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

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1. Cave M, et al. Chronic Low-Level Exposure to Toxicants Linked to Liver Disease in U.S. Adults. Digestive Disease Week® 2009 (DDW®). Abstract #289.
2. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.
3. Shrivastava S, Bera T, Singh SK, et al. Characterization of Antiplatelet Properties of Silver Nanoparticles. ACS Nano. 2009 May. [View Abstract](#)

Journal of Dietary Supplements



Natural Standard Research Collaboration invites researchers to submit articles to the [Journal of Dietary Supplements \(JDS\)](#) – an international peer-reviewed forum for original research and review articles that focus on vitamins, minerals, herbs and other substances that make up the multi-billion dollar dietary supplement industry. The journal addresses important issues that meet a broad range of interests – not only in integrative healthcare, but also in academic, regulatory and industrial sectors.

The [Journal of Dietary Supplements](#) (formerly the Journal of Nutraceuticals, Functional & Medical Foods) was recently retitled to reflect the growing field of dietary supplement research. Chief editor Catherine Ulbricht is the founder of **Natural Standard**, an international research collaboration that aggregates and synthesizes data on complementary and alternative therapies. Dr. Wendy Chao is Associate Editor of the publication. The distinguished [editorial board](#) includes the following internationally known scientists:

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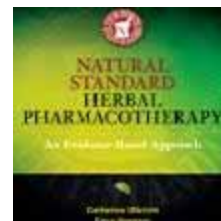
Botanical Medicine

Bastyr University, Eugene, OR

Submissions and pre-submission inquiries can be sent via e-mail to jds@naturalstandard.com.

New Natural Standard Books

Two new **Natural Standard** publications will soon hit local bookstores. Both publications, *Natural Standard's Herbal Pharmacotherapy: An Evidence-Based Approach* and *Natural Standard Herb & Supplement Guide: An Evidence-Based Reference*, have been rigorously peer reviewed and edited by **Natural Standard's** prestigious multidisciplinary editorial board.



[Natural Standard's Herbal Pharmacotherapy: An Evidence-Based Approach](#)

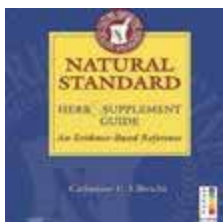
provides practical guidance on the use of herbal therapies for medical conditions. Chapters are organized by medical condition and present supportive evidence, including potential mechanisms of action and dosing, for selected herbal therapies.

The chapters also include integrative therapy plans to help clinicians quickly assess patient needs and create cohesive treatment plans. In addition, adjunct therapies, including herbs, supplements and modalities, that are commonly used in combination with primary treatments are discussed. Case studies, which summarize efficacy, safety, dosing and interactions for high-utilization products, help prepare healthcare providers for patient counseling in clinical practice.

Review questions, similar to those on national board exams, allow readers to evaluate their learning and identify areas for further study.

The book also includes several appendices, which provide information about lab values as well as the safety, interactions and pharmacokinetics of select herbs.

To order a copy of the book, please [click here](#).



The *Natural Standard Herb & Supplement Guide: An Evidence-Based Reference* features 400 concise monographs that cross reference therapies by medical condition and scientific evidence grade.

The user-friendly format summarizes key information, including safety, effectiveness and dosing for each herb and supplement. The dosing information for adults and children makes this resource clinically relevant in any setting.

Inside Natural Standard

Welcome:

Natural Standard would like to welcome Lisa Brown and Thadd Palmer to the team.

Natural Standard Systematic Reviews Published:



Two **Natural Standard** systematic reviews on maitake mushroom and Essiac® are available in the Spring 2009 issue of the *Journal of the Society for Integrative Oncology (JSIO)*, a Medline-listed, peer-reviewed scientific journal. These evidence-based reviews provide written and statistical analyses of scientific literature, expert opinion, folkloric precedent, history, pharmacology, kinetics/dynamics, interactions, adverse effects, toxicology and dosing information.



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