Cancer Invest. 2004;22(4):515-21.

Pilot evaluation of black cohosh for the treatment of hot flashes in women.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Hot flashes cause significant morbidity in postmenopausal **women**, including **women** with breast cancer. We undertook a **pilot** study to estimate the effectiveness of **black cohosh** to reduce **hot flashes**.

METHODS: Women who reported significant **hot flashes** (> or = 14 per week) were enrolled. **Black cohosh** was given in the form of the commercial product Remifemin. The first week was a no-**treatment** baseline period, and **therapy** was given for the subsequent 4 weeks. **Hot** flash data were collected by daily questionnaires during baseline and **treatment** weeks. Adverse effects were recorded.

RESULTS: Twenty-one **women** completed the study. Their mean age was 56 years (range, 38-80). Thirteen patients had a history of breast cancer. Six patients were taking tamoxifen or raloxifene. Patients reported an average of 8.3 **hot flashes** per day during the baseline week. The reduction in mean daily **hot** flash frequency was 50% (95% CI, 34%-65%), while weekly **hot** flash scores were reduced 56% (95% CI, 40%-71%) at completion of the study. Overall, patients reported less trouble with sleeping, less fatigue, and less abnormal sweating. No patients stopped **therapy** because of adverse effects.

CONCLUSIONS: Black cohosh appeared to reduce **hot flashes** and had a low toxicity. The efficacy found in this trial seems to be more than would be expected by a placebo effect (20%-30% **hot** flash reduction in previous trials). These results suggest that further **evaluation** of this **black cohosh** preparation with a phase III randomized trial is indicated.

Comment in

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PMID: 15565808 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

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