

Study Suggests Ginkgo Ineffective Memory Enhancer

--The herbal enhancer Ginkgo may not be living up to claims. --



The Ginkgo.

BACKGROUND:

What plant may cure Alzheimer's disease, increase circulation, tastes like almonds and smells like rancid butter? This plant is none other than Ginkgo biloba. Ginkgo extracts have played a crucial role in Chinese herbal medicine for many centuries. Only recently has western medicine began to seriously study the medicinal uses of ginkgo.

The modern-day Ginkgo biloba has a very distinct appearance characterized by its fan-shaped leaves. In fact, the Japanese sometimes call this species I-cho, "tree with leaves like a duck's foot." It can grow up to 30 meters tall and can live for a millenium. It is also well-known for its unique seeds, which have long been used as a food source in Asia. The smell of a great mass of rotting seeds can also be overpowering. It is due to the malodorous chemical compound butyric acid, which is found in the integument of the seed; it is the same compound that gives rancid butter its "distinctive" smell.

Ginkgo biloba is a highly adaptable plant that can grow in almost any temperate or Mediterranean climate. It is also resistant to

pollution and pests. These attributes have made the male ginkgos very popular in cities.

STORY:

A Randomized Controlled Trial, by Paul R. Solomon, PhD; Felicity Adams, BA; Amanda Silver, BA; Jill Zimmer, BA; and Richard DeVeaux, PhD

SOURCE: The Journal of the American Medical Association 2002;288:835-840.

CONTEXT: Several over-the-counter treatments are marketed as having the ability to improve memory, attention, and related cognitive functions in as little as 4 weeks. These claims, however, are generally not supported by well-controlled clinical studies.

OBJECTIVE: To evaluate whether ginkgo, an over-the-counter agent marketed as enhancing memory, improves memory in elderly adults as measured by objective neuropsychological tests and subjective ratings.

DESIGN: Six-week randomized, placebo-controlled, parallel-group trial.

SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS: Community-dwelling volunteer men (n = 98) and women (n = 132) older than 60 years with Mini-Mental State Examination scores greater than 26 and in generally good health were recruited by a US academic center via newspaper advertisements and enrolled over a 26-month period from July 1996 to September 1998.

PROCEDURE: Participants were randomly assigned to receive ginkgo, 40 mg 3 times per day (n = 115), or matching placebo (n = 115).

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES: Standardized neuropsychological tests of verbal and nonverbal

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learning and memory, attention and concentration, naming and expressive language, participant self-report on a memory questionnaire, and caregiver clinical global impression of change as completed by a companion.

RESULTS: Two hundred three participants (88%) completed the protocol. Analysis of the modified intent-to-treat population (all 219 participants returning for evaluation) indicated that there were no significant differences between treatment groups on any outcome measure. Analysis of the fully evaluable population (the 203 who complied with treatment and returned for evaluation) also indicated no significant differences for any outcome measure.

CONCLUSIONS: The results of this 6-week study indicate that ginkgo did not facilitate performance on standard neuropsychological tests of learning, memory, attention, and concentration or naming and verbal fluency in elderly adults without cognitive impairment. The ginkgo group also did not differ from the control group in terms of self-reported memory function or global rating by spouses, friends, and relatives. These data suggest that when taken following the manufacturer's instructions, ginkgo provides no measurable benefit in memory or related cognitive function to adults with healthy cognitive function.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Hoping to give your memory or mental abilities a boost with ginkgo biloba? You may be disappointed by the results of study released Tuesday, which found no apparent memory-enhancing benefit for healthy people over 60.

"These data suggest that when taken following the manufacturer's instructions ginkgo provides no measurable benefit in memory or related cognitive function to adults with healthy cognitive function," according to the report in the August 21st issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Ginkgo biloba is widely advertised to be helpful for a variety of conditions including

memory loss and dementia. As a result many healthy people and those with mental decline have turned to the unregulated dietary supplement with the hopes of improving, or maintaining their mental abilities.

All of the participants underwent a battery of tests designed to assess their mental abilities including memory before, during, and after the study period. Solomon's team also interviewed a close companion about the mental abilities of each of the men and women enrolled in the study. Overall, 88% of the people completed the study, and the researchers found that "ginkgo did not facilitate performance on standard neuropsychological tests of learning, memory, attention, and concentration or naming and verbal fluency in elderly adults without cognitive impairment."

The study findings may not apply to different types of consumers taking other doses, the authors note. "It is certainly possible that higher doses or longer periods of exposure than used in this study are necessary to detect changes; however, we administered the compound following the manufacturer's instructions," Solomon's team writes.

The dose used in the study was 120 milligrams per day, the same dose suggested by the German Commission E. More than 5 million prescriptions are written for ginkgo in Germany each year, mostly to treat dementia.

The researchers also did not measure the quality of the product, but note that the manufacturer says the product is "processed under strict guidelines...ensured through extensive quality control."

The authors note that ginkgo sales reached \$240 million in the US in 1997, despite "the paucity of well-controlled" studies on its efficacy. "In summary, this study does not support the manufacturer's claims of the benefits ginkgo on learning and memory," they conclude.

Though the results are for a specific group, it raises doubts as to its effectiveness to the general population.

TIMBER WARS

--How fires may forge truce in 'timber wars' New approaches could bridge political divides.--

BACKGROUND:

Just like two years ago, this fire season began early and has continued almost unabated. The nearly 6 million acres burned to date are more than twice the 10-year average for this point in the year. Colorado and Arizona have experienced the largest fires in their history. Images of forests being consumed by flames hundreds of feet high have become a staple on national TV news.

The fires, which could cost as much as \$2 billion to fight, have hurt tourism in several states and focused attention on the nation's wildfire policy. Adding urgency to the debate is the fact that about 34 million (and growing) Americans live in or near areas of high risk of fire.

For most of the past century, the federal government's approach to fire was dictated by a single, traumatic event: the Big Blowup of 1910. In the space of two hellish days, raging wildfires consumed 3 million acres in Idaho and Montana and killed 78 firefighters.

For decades thereafter, the Forest Service's attitude on wildfires was simple: Put them out. In 1926, the goal was to control all fires before they grew to 10 acres. A decade later, policy became stopping all fires by 10 a.m. the second day.

Suppression of fire resulted in thickly crowded stands of trees. That's particularly true in mid-elevation Ponderosa pine forests, the predominant forest type in many areas of the West where people have built homes. Under natural conditions, these forests had only a few dozen trees per acre. They were kept free of brush and small trees by frequent, low-intensity fires that crept along the ground and usually singed the bark of large trees but left them healthy. Today, many of the West's Ponderosa pine forests have several hundred trees per acre. When fire strikes, it often quickly becomes a crown fire, jumping through the treetops.

In the 1970s, some federal agencies began to acknowledge that fire had a beneficial role in the forest ecosystems by clearing out excess vegetation. "Let burn" policies were instituted for some remote areas where fires would be monitored and fought only if they moved toward populated areas.

In 1995, the first comprehensive wildfire policy was adopted by the Agriculture and Interior departments. It concluded that decades of eliminating fire, combined with poor timber harvesting and grazing practices had severely altered forest conditions intervals in the West.

Much of the debate today concerns how to return these thick forests to more natural conditions so that fires can again be allowed to burn. Reintroducing fire, the government's fire policy says, "is both urgent and enormous."

But many environmentalists say the government has paid only lip service to the policy of allowing fires to resume their natural place.

STORY:

ASHLAND, OR -- As firefighters from as far away as New Zealand work to dampen one of the worst wildfire seasons in US history, Democrats and Republicans in Congress and state capitols are joining forces to make the West less flammable.

Once the smoke clears, which may not be until seasonal rains return in the fall, this could be the means for negotiating a truce in the West's "timber wars." The current crisis is also opening up the possibility for innovative ways of making forest thinning (not to be confused with massive clear-cuts) commercially viable. Even some conservation groups now favor this, despite their traditional opposition to anything involving a chain saw.

President Bush visited the "Biscuit Fire," now spread over nearly 450,000 acres in Oregon and California, highlighting an issue that is as politically charged as it's ever been.

Senator Wyden has joined with Sen. Larry Craig (R) of Idaho to sponsor a bill that would protect older trees while making it easier for timber companies to cut younger trees in federal

forests. It would do that by speeding up the appeals process that has blocked many sales.

This is in line with what other lawmakers want as well. "Without active management, we will be asking ourselves in a few short years where our forests have gone," a bipartisan group of senators warned recently. "We must deal with this problem and take an aggressive proactive approach to fire and forest management."

This turn of events is putting Democrats at odds with many of their traditional supporters in the environmental community. But there's also a sense that the main thing is forest protection and fire prevention not simply scoring political points.

"The bottom line has to be solution-driven rather than blame-driven," says Lou Gold, a longtime forest activist who lives near the massive fire in Oregon that has been burning for more than a month and is only 35 percent contained.

Across much of the West, the natural fires that historically swept the forest floor while leaving the larger trees have been replaced by a century of fire suppression, industrial logging, and tree plantations. In the process, downed limbs and other natural woody debris have built to unnatural levels. High heat, low humidity, winds, and lightning strikes complete a situation that this year has burned nearly 6 million acres.

While biologists stress the importance of healthy mixed-age forests, they also acknowledge that mechanical manipulation some logging may be necessary to replace natural fires no longer tolerated by a public that wants to live near and play in the woods.

"Done correctly, thinning younger stands can produce logs while at the same time enhancing ecological and conservation values by reducing susceptibility to fire and other disturbances...." seven prominent scientists from the Pacific Northwest wrote last year to federal officials.

Thinning forests near communities is understandable to stop the spread of fire near homes, thinning the forests far from communities is justified to protect municipal water sources and endangered animal and plant species. And some

say with the West in the grip of a prolonged drought and with the region's forests severely overgrown, aggressive thinning by loggers must come before natural or intentional fire can be re-introduced.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Three major questions need to be resolved: Should we stop the fires? How should we stop the fires? And how should the cost of reducing the risk of potentially catastrophic fires be met?

The timber industry and its political supporters say enough timber needs to be cut (typically larger, older trees) to at least cover the cost of thinning and cleaning up fire-prone forests.

Others argue that this makes no more sense than charging individuals whose homes are saved from destruction by city firefighters. "This coupling of public safety and timber harvests is absurd," says Mr. Gold, the Oregon activist. He adds, "Risk reduction on public land and financial assistance to private landowners could be achieved for a lot less than we now have to spend putting out the Biscuit Fire."

Part of the answer may be new sawmills specifically designed to handle logs as small as five inches in diameter the kinds of trees that scientists say should be thinned to preserve bigger, older trees while reducing fire risks.

Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (academic, environmental, business, and government organizations in Arizona) recently reported that there would be a market for products from smaller logs, including laminated beams and flooring. But to make it happen, the group said, would take government support. "We have clearly identified a new market niche in the Southwest, and it is entirely driven by federal action," says Catherine Mater, the study's lead author.

The end result could be a win-win situation for business and the environment. "The potential to create a new economic sector based entirely on restoration activities is high," says Brad Ack of the Grand Canyon Trust, a conservation group in Flagstaff, Ariz. "This is doing good and doing well at the same time." But can we agree?

WHO YOU NEED TO KNOW:



CHARLTON HESTON

Steely jawed, hard bodied, terse in speech, Charlton Heston is an American man's man, an epic unto himself. While he has played modern men, he is at his best when portraying larger-than-life figures from world history.

He was born John Charleton Carter on October 4, 1924 and originally trained in the classics in Northwestern University's drama program. He also performed on the radio, and served in the Air Force for three years during WWII. Afterwards, he went to work as a model in New York, where he met his wife, fellow model Lydia Clarke, to whom he is still happily married. Later, the two operated a theater in Asheville, NC.

He made his Hollywood film debut in William Dieterle's film noir *Dark City* playing opposite Elizabeth Scott. He went on to appear as a white man raised in Indian culture in *The Savage* (1952) and as a snob who snubs a country girl in King Vidor's *Ruby Gentry* (1952). His big break came when Cecil B. DeMille cast him as the bitter circus manager Brad Braden in *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952).

Other blockbusters include his portrayal of Buffalo Bill in *Pony Express* and then Andrew Jackson in *The President's Lady* (both 1953), Moses in *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and the title role in William Wyler's *Ben Hur* for which he won an Academy Award.

Outside of his filmwork, Heston served six terms as the president of the Screen Actors Guild and also chaired the American Film Institute. Active in such charities as The Will Rogers Institute, he was awarded the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award at the 1977 Oscar ceremony. Known as a conservative Republican and proud member of the National Rifle Association, Heston worked closely with his long-time colleague and

friend President Ronald Reagan as the leader of the president's task force on arts and the humanities. He is now in the news for his recent announcement that he is exhibiting Alzheimer's like symptoms.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Baby Makes "No. 3" for Jackson?

Yes, according to a report in the new issue of *People* magazine, the stork has made another stop at Neverland Ranch.

The coming-out party for the newborn was last month in Las Vegas, when Jackson arrived at a Siegfried and Roy show with *three* kids in tow, rather than his regular two. According to the magazine, Jackson went backstage after the performance and introduced a six-month-old boy to the bronzed tiger tamers as "my third child." Jackson already has two children, a five-year-old son named Prince Michael Jackson, and a four-year-old daughter, Paris Michael Jackson, both with ex-wife Debbie Rowe.

Like everything in the singer's life, the latest addition to the Jackson camp is cloaked in mystery. Few details are available, but evidently the baby's name is Prince Michael II. Jackson reportedly refers to the tyke as "the third" or "Number 3." There's some speculation the maternal unit might have been Rowe, who has supposedly remained close to Jackson since their 1999 divorce.

Thus ends a rather active summer in Jackson-related news. Just last week, his first ex-wife, Lisa Marie Presley, tied the knot with actor Nicolas Cage. Last month, he lent his support to a coalition accusing the recording industry of cheating artists out of profits. He hoisted a "Sony is Phoney" sign and railed against Tommy Mottola, for allegedly mistreating artists of color. Finally, reports published in July said Jackson's much-hyped September 11 charity single, "What More Can I Give?," was a bust.

SPORTS:**X Games Are Back!**

PHILADELPHIA - With high-flying motorcycles, twisting skateboarders, and a constant rock music beat, the eighth X Games began with cheers from fans who endured the heat outdoors or sought refuge inside the First Union Center.

The family influence is prevalent throughout the X Games, perhaps the only sporting event that offers fans the options of checking bikes, skateboards or strollers upon entry. Free admission certainly adds to the attraction of the X Games, being held here the second consecutive year. More than 26,000 fans attended the event over the course of 10 hours for the opening day.

During the morning sessions, parents and kids alike cooed at the skateboard vert practice inside the air-conditioned arena. Outside in the 90-plus degree heat, many fans watched the Moto X Freestyle participants perform their soaring stunts.

ESPN maintains an onsite medical staff available to staff and spectators, but there were no major incidents of heat-related health problems, according to the event's organizers.

The "Xperience" section of the complex offered fans a chance to try their hands at scaling a climbing wall or strapping into a harness attached to bungee cords and bouncing into the air. For those who preferred to keep their feet on the ground, the Xperience offered airbrush body art, as well as a variety of interactive booths and promotional displays for X Games' sponsors. And for the next generation of X Games athletes, there was a small skate park, with jumps and ramps designed for recreational and novice skaters.

Among the few complaints from spectators was the lack of parking, and the great distance needed to walk from the lots, through the maze of metal dividers, to the sports complex.

Event organizers have been encouraging fans to use mass transit, because of the limited parking.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:

August 24, 2002

Vesuvius Erupts:

After centuries of dormancy, Mount Vesuvius erupts in southern Italy, devastating the prosperous Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and killing thousands. The cities, buried under a thick layer of volcanic material and mud, were never rebuilt and largely forgotten in the course of history. In the 18th century, Pompeii and Herculaneum were rediscovered and excavated, providing an unprecedented archaeological record of the everyday life of an ancient civilization startlingly preserved.

The ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum thrived near the base of Mount Vesuvius at the Bay of Naples. In the time of the early Roman Empire, 20,000 people lived in Pompeii, including merchants, manufacturers, and farmers who exploited the rich soil of the region with numerous vineyards and orchards. None suspected that the black fertile earth was the legacy of earlier eruptions of Mount Vesuvius. Herculaneum was a city of 5,000 and a favorite summer destination for rich Romans. There were smaller resort communities in the area as well, such as the quiet little town of Stabiae.

At noon on August 24, 79 A.D., the peak of Mount Vesuvius exploded, propelling a 10-mile mushroom cloud of ash and pumice into the stratosphere. For the next 12 hours, volcanic ash and a hail of pumice stones up to 3 inches in diameter showered Pompeii, forcing the city's occupants to flee in terror. Some 2,000 people stayed in Pompeii, holed up in cellars or stone structures, hoping to wait out the eruption. A giant cloud of hot ash and gas followed by mud and rock surged down the western flank of Vesuvius, engulfing Herculaneum and burying the city.

The people who remained in Pompeii were killed on the morning of August 25 when a cloud of toxic gas poured into the city, suffocating all that remained. A flow of rock and ash followed, collapsing roofs and walls and burying the city.

FEATURE:
New Technology

PET FINDER

HELSINKI - Lost your cat or dog? No need to whistle or call on a fruitless search -- just track your pet with your mobile phone. A Finnish firm says "wanted" posters of lost pets will be a thing of the past thanks to new technology: a mobile phone and a tracking unit that is strapped on the back of your animal.



When the pet goes missing its movements are followed via an electronic map displayed on a hand-held monitor by the owner. The

device is also expected to be popular among hunters needing to trace their dogs searching for game, said Matti Koskelo, sales manager at Pointer Solutions, one of the firms marketing the system.

Positioning Solutions Oy Pointer Solutions Ltd. is an international positioning solution provider. It develops, produces and sells positioning devices and services for people, pet, animal, rescue, property and vehicle fleet. This Scandinavian company has over 23,000 distribution bases for its sport dog tracking radars. With over 60,000 direct customers in Europe, Pointer has been able to develop ultimate RF- and GSM positioning solutions.

The pet transmitter sends a harmless radiosignal, which your receiver will follow up to an approximately four mile range. It has a frequency of 433 MHz (FFC approved in USA, approved in all European countries). It can track two dogs simultaneously and its size is similar to a cellular phone.

See for yourself at www.pointersolutions.com,
or contact Sales Director Matti Koskelo at
matti.koskelo@pointersolutions.com

SHARK REPELLER

Shark Safe has developed a lightweight, waterproof, removable unit, housing a rechargeable battery pack and control electronics used to power four electrodes built into the Surfboard or Body Board and/or two electrodes attached to the human body. It creates a repulsion field that will keep sharks away.

Shark Safe has established a specific wave pattern, frequency and voltage that is adequate to deter a shark under normal sea conditions without harming it, whilst at the same time not causing any discomfort or hazard to other marine life or humans.

Sharks have a nervous system similar to human beings, with the addition of extremely sensitive antennae called "Ampullae of Lorenzini" in their snout allowing them to detect electrical energy at very low levels. At particular levels, a shark's internal sensation of the energy becomes uncomfortable and the shark will try to avoid the energy source.

Extensive testing has demonstrated that this product will operate in sea water under the following conditions:

- Water temperature : 58 - 74 F
- Depth : up to 66 feet
- Measure of water conductivity : 35 - 60 millisemens
- Range : Normal mode selection 6-10 feet
Emergency Mode Selections for 10 – 13 feet effective

The tests revealed that the measure of water conductivity near river and other fresh water discharges will fall below the safe levels above.

The weight of the unit in this application is under .5 pounds. A fully charged battery has an operating time of approximately 2 hours (120 mins) in the NORMAL mode, and 1 hour (20 mins) in the EMERGENCY mode. The battery charger comes with a LED On / Off display, and a replaceable 12 Volt vehicle Battery.

See for yourself at www.sharksafe.com

Quote of the Week:

Many things fall between the cup and the mouth.
-Proverb

Fact of the Week:

According to zoologists, elephants love to eat licorice.

Word of the Week:

labrose (la' bros) a. Having thick lips

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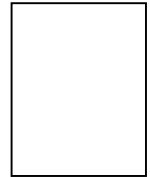
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