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## **Herbal extract as effective as commonly prescribed anti-depressant**

### **Acute treatment of moderate to severe depression with hypericum extract WS 5570 (St John's Wort): randomised controlled double blind non-inferiority trial versus paroxetine BMJ Online First**

A specially manufactured extract from the herb St John's Wort is at least as effective in treating depression as a commonly prescribed anti-depressant, according to new research published on bmj.com today.

St John's Wort\* and the anti-depressant drug Paroxetine\*\* were used in a trial to treat patients with moderate or severe depression. The researchers asked 301 participants of both sexes from German mental health centres to take part in the trial. The two drugs were taken by the patients aged 18-70 over a six week period during 2000 -2003.

At the end of the trial half (61 out of 122) of those who took St John's Wort found their symptoms in decline, whilst only a third (43 out of 122) of those taking Paroxetine went into remission.

Participants also suffered more side-effects by taking Paroxetine with 269 adverse effects being reported over the treatment period. Those taking St John's Wort reported 172 adverse effects – the most common in both cases being stomach disorders.

The authors support the use of St John's Wort as an alternative to treat depression and welcome more research in this area.

\* Clinical name hypericum extract WS 5570

\*\* Paroxetine is a Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI) drug – a class of anti-depressants