



This occasional section within the journal surveys visions and achievements, often not on the main track of the developing biomedical sciences, but all relating to discoveries and developments of medicinal – both ancient and modern. What they have in common, in one way or another, is providing further background and glances around the edges of the core discipline of pharmacognosy, as it has been and continues to evolve within our times.

The Janus Corner

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Intravenous mistletoe therapy is effective in patients with some treatment-resistant cancers

Mistletoe has been used as a complementary therapy in cancer patients to improve the quality of life during clinical treatment. However, there is a lack of research to support its use for these purposes. A recent study from a research group at Johns Hopkins Cancer Centre in Baltimore, USA have published the results of a phase I clinical trial of intraceneous administration of a product

named Helixor M, which is based on mistletoe extracts.¹ The study determined that the mistletoe extract was tolerated in cancer patients at doses up to 600 mg administered three times a week. Interestingly, the mistletoe extract stabilised tumour growth in approximately 25% of patients, with no evident growth noted. Of greater interest. The mistletoe therapy decreased tumour size substantially in approximately 14% of the test group and then remained stable in size for a further 2-5 months. Additionally, all patients reported substantial quality of life improvements, particularly related to fatigue, nausea and chills. However, the effects of mistletoe did not meet the official criteria for a partial response, and more study is required to confirm these trends. Additionally, the Johns Hopkins study only included 21 patients and a substantially greater patient pool is required to support this data.

REFERENCE

1. Paller CJ, Wang L, Fu W, Kumar R, Durham JN, Azad NS, *et al.* Phase I trial of intravenous mistletoe extract in advanced cancer. *Cancer Res Commun.* 2023;3(2):338-46. doi: 10.1158/2767-9764.CRC-23-0002, PMID 36860652.



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