The Homeopathic Effects of *Sabal Serrulata* against Prostate Cancer: an *in vitro* approach

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**Introduction**

**The concept**

Homeopathy is a medical system considered as a part of the Complementary and Alternative Medicine. *Sabal Serrulata* is its founder and the formulated the basic principles in the early 19th century.

Homeopathy is based on two central principles:

- **Principle of similarity.** It states that a substance able to cause a symptom in a healthy subject can also be used to cure that symptom.
- **Principle of infinitesimal doses.** It states that a therapeutic substance becomes more potent as it is diluted and agitated (succussion).

The homeopathic preparations are done by a process of potentization which involves repeated dilutions with succussion at each step (see Figure 5).

**Placebo effect**

In any pharmacologic treatment, the therapeutic effects have two separate specific effects (bioassay, duration, interactions, etc.) and nonspecific effects (expectations and placebo, non-pharmacologic characteristics, placebo-effect etc.).

Some evidences suggest that the placebo effect is a genuine psychological event conditioned by the overall therapeutic context (see Figure 3).

In homeopathy, the process of choosing the right medicine for a symptom results not only a skilled homoeopath but also an opened-minded patient willing to present or her or his physical and mental symptoms with a lot of detail. Due to this, if has been hypothesised that:

The placebo phenomenon can have a possible influence on effectiveness rates of homeopathic treatment.

**How to choose the proper treatment?**

- **Materia medica (MM):** Homeopathic Remedy Reference Guide that lists homeopathic remedies with their associated symptomatology.
- **Reporting:** Index of disease with its associated symptomatology. For each symptom there is a remedy that according to MM is the most suitable.

This review will focus on the study of *Sabal Serrulata*, which has effects against prostate pain, emission of prostatic secretions and swelling, induration and inflammation.

**Methods**

- Cytotoxicity measured using MTT assay.
- Anti-inflammatory activity measured by: prostatin blue exclusion assay.
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**Results**

**Sabal Serrulata** is a popular phytotherapeutic agent for the treatment of urologic problems like prostate cancer. The literature describes various studies in favour and against *Sabal Serrulata*’s efficacy (see Figure 4).

**Homeopathy in cancer**

Prostate cancer is the second most frequent cancer affecting men (15% of male cancer cases). In Figure 2 there is shown the number of new cases of prostate cancer in 2006 and 2012.

- Among prostate cancer patients, approaching cancer with homeopathy is becoming increasingly popular.

**Objective**

Present an overview about current studies that test the effects of *Sabal Serrulata* on cells and animal models.

**Sabal Serrulata** is a popular phytho-therapeutic agent for the treatment of urologic problems like prostate cancer. The literature describes various studies in favour and against *Sabal Serrulata*’s efficacy (see Figure 5).

In Table 2 are shown the main results obtained and their possible underlying mechanisms (see Table 2).

This review suggests that due to the lack of consensus, there are insufficient scientific evidences to ensure that *Sabal Serrulata* is the right remedy of choice for prostate cancer.

**Conclusion**

- Homeopathy one of the most controversial subjects in CAM: the mode of action of the homeopathic potentization is still unknown, the assumptions upon which homeopathy is based are not supported by the modern scientific principle, and the placebo effect has a possible influence on effectiveness rates of homeopathy.
- There is a very limited number of reports in the scientific literature. None of the studies are conducted by a blinded research.
- The administration of Conium maculatum and Thuja Occidentalis along with *Sabal Serrulata* could show more positive effects on cancer.

**Figure 1:** Process of potentiation.

**Figure 2:** Conduction of the psychosocial context.

**Figure 3:** Number of reviewed studies showing positive and negative results about *Sabal Serrulata*’s efficacy (in *in vitro* and *in vivo*).

**Figure 4:** Search result from "Sabal Serrulata" Repertory.

**Figure 5:** Process of potentiation.

**Table 1:** Nomenclature of the most used homeopathic remedies. Potencies are abbreviated with a letter. The number preceding the letter indicates the concentration. The choice of this remedy was made following two criteria: Depending on the patient's symptomatology the therapist has a lot of remedial. Among them he/she has to choose the most suitable for the patient.

**Table 2:** Main results. Studies in favour and against *Sabal Serrulata*’s efficacy and its possible underlying mechanisms.