

CONNEXIENCE

"Knowledge is the only thing that increases when shared." Sacha Boudjema

Probiotics and treatment of digestive disorders: a reference guide based on clinical evidence of efficacy

Hungin et al., 2013. *Alimentary Pharmacology
and Therapeutics*



IN BRIEF

AIM OF THIS STUDY

To provide health professionals with a practical reference guide on the proven benefits of probiotics in the treatment of intestinal disorders.

WORTH NOTING

The critical analysis, by a group of European general practitioners who are experts in gastroenterology, of clinical studies conducted using probiotic strains on patients suffering from gastrointestinal disorders, has helped to confirm the benefits of certain strains in treating these patients. A substantial amount of evidence is particularly acknowledged by the experts in relieving abdominal pain in patients suffering from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and Lactibiane Référence is one of the products included in this guideline. The physicians also evidenced that Lactibiane helped to improve the patients' quality of life. This acknowledgement by the European Society for Primary Care for Gastroenterology strengthens Lactibiane Référence's position in the treatment of digestive disorders.

EXPERT'S OPINION

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This international reference guide, based on sound scientific evidence, is a key tool for the daily practice of physicians and will now permit the most appropriate probiotic to be offered in accordance with the gastrointestinal symptom or symptoms encountered. In the field of IBS, the Lactibiane Référence health solution has thus obtained approval from the European Society for Gastroenterology's experts for its demonstrated efficacy in limiting abdominal pain, improving quality of life and relieving problems with gastrointestinal transit. Lastly, publication of this guide serves as a reminder that not all probiotics are alike and that their health impact is still primarily strain, dose and formulation dependent.

IN DETAIL

BACKGROUND

Digestive disorders account for at least 10% of the reasons for visits to local surgeries. Medical treatment aims to reduce functional problems, keep patients socially and professionally active and improve their quality of life. While pharmacological treatments are available, their efficacy is sometimes limited with too many adverse effects. While probiotic strains are available on the market, they are not all alike. The European Society for Primary Care for Gastroenterology, a European committee of general practitioners who are experts in gastroenterology, has systematically conducted a review of the relevant literature, identifying the studies conducted with probiotics in gastroenterology, evaluating them and publishing a consensual reference guide for general practitioners.

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

A systematic review of the relevant literature was conducted to seek out articles evaluating the efficacy of probiotic strains in gastroenterology. A sub-set of articles on clinical tests was selected in an effort to answer 16 "generic" questions asked by the expert committee. After a critical analysis of the articles, each question was put to two rounds of votes. If 100% of the physicians in the working group answered "yes" in the first round, the level of certainty was scored as "high". If 70% to 100% of the experts were "for" after both rounds of voting, the level of certainty was ranked as "moderate". The lower levels were "low" and "very low".

FINDINGS

Selection of clinical studies

By 31 January 2012, more than 3 000 articles evaluating the efficacy of probiotics in intestinal disorders had been published in Pubmed and/or Embase. Of these articles, about 1 out of 10 (n=287) referred to a clinical study conducted on adults with clinical assessments based on objective and recognized measurements. Only 37 of these studies presented a high-quality methodology meeting the usual set of standards (golden standards) namely, a double-blind randomised controlled trial (e.g.: Drouault-Holowacz et al., 2008*). Most of the studies were conducted on patients suffering from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS, n=19) or diarrhoea following a course of antibiotics (n=10). All in all, the efficacy of 32 probiotic strains (including the Lactibiane Référence formulation) was assessed alone or alongside a dosage frequency of 1 to 3 times/day for doses varying from 1 106 to 4.5 1011 CFU (Colony Forming Units).

Level of certainty

The reference guide was designed around 16 potentially "beneficial" points evaluated by the group of experts. The highest level of evidence was allocated to the following five points:

- > Some probiotic strains help to relieve all of the symptoms in patients suffering from IBS
- > Some probiotic strains help to relieve abdominal pain in patients suffering from IBS (see example below of Lactibiane Référence)
- > For patients receiving a course of antibiotics, some probiotic strains present a benefit as an adjuvant treatment to prevent or reduce the duration of associated episodes of diarrhoea
- > For patients receiving treatment to eradicate *Helicobacter pylori*, some probiotic strains present a benefit as an adjuvant treatment to prevent or reduce the duration of associated episodes of diarrhoea
- > Probiotic strains have a favourable safety profile for patients suffering from gastrointestinal disorders that are usually treated by a general practitioner.

Moderate levels of evidence were obtained for four other "beneficial" points (see example below on quality of life).

After analysing the Drouault-Holowacz et al. article, 2008*,

- > 100% of the experts confirmed that "Lactibiane Référence helps to reduce abdominal pain in patients suffering from irritable bowel syndrome"
- > 70% of the assessors approved the following statement: "Lactibiane Référence helps to improve the frequency and/or consistency of stools in IBS patients"
- > 80% of the experts confirmed that "Lactibiane Référence helps to improve patients' quality of life".

CONCLUSION

This critical analysis of the literature corroborates not only the observations made "in the field" but also serves as a true acknowledgement by the medical community of the health benefits of certain probiotic strains. The experts have thus confirmed that "Lactibiane Référence was effective in the treatment of IBS-related pain, helping to improve the stools (frequency and/or consistency) and quality of life of patients". This specialty, whose formulation is the result of substantive scientific work, has thus been recognised as a possible treatment for patients suffering from digestive disorders.

* Drouault-Holowacz S, Bieuvelet S, Burckel A, Cazaubiel M, Dray X, Marteau P. A double blind randomized controlled trial of a probiotic combination in 100 patients with irritable bowel syndrome. *Gastroenterol Clin Biol.* 2008 Feb;32(2):147-52.