

**Ayurvedic intervention for rheumatoid arthritis: a systematic review**A P G Amarasinghe<sup>1\*</sup>, J Park<sup>2</sup>, M Dwivedi<sup>3</sup> and E Ernst<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>*Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka*<sup>2</sup>*Department of Complementary Medicine, Peninsula Medical School, University of Exeter, United Kingdom*<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, India*

Pain and swelling in multiple joints associated with stiffness, tenderness, fever and lack of hunger etc. are the salient features of "Āmavāta (AV)" explained in the Ayurveda system of medicine. The symptoms of AV are equivalent to the symptoms found in Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). The prevalence and impact of RA is increasing around the world as the elderly population increases. Ayurvedic treatment has been used for RA/AV for centuries, but scientific studies on this subject have only started in the last couple of decades. Although some of this studies have suggested their positive effects on this disease condition, systematic review of all Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) of Ayurvedic studies has not yet been conducted. To systematically review all RCTs, literature searches were conducted in the following databases: Medline (1969-2003 March), Embase (1985-2003 February), Amed (1980-2003 March), Cochrane Controlled Trial Register (- 2003 March) and the abstract service of Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha (1976-2003 March). Hand search was carried out in one Sri Lankan and three Indian journals. A combination of the following keywords was used: ("rheumatoid arthritis" OR "amavata" OR "sandhivata") and ("ayurveda" OR "ayurvedic" OR "herb" OR "plant"). Key data of included studies were extracted and reviewed together with the quality assessing scale. Thirty three articles were identified for possible inclusion in the review. Of these 8 papers investigated the effects of 11 different Ayurvedic interventions namely *Boswellia serrata*, *Balasmოდendrum mukul*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Alpenia officinale*, *Withania somnifera*, *Zingiber officinale*, *Circuma longa*, Mahayogaraja guggul, Maharasnadi quatha, Gold ash and Dashamularista. Subjects treated with Ayurvedic formulae showed statistically significant improvement compared with the comparator drug. All the side effects described in some studies are mild and self limited. However, long term safety of herbal medicine has not been established. Due to poor RCT study designs it is difficult to assess the exact efficacy of Ayurvedic treatment for RA. This review has demonstrated that several of Ayurvedic formulae may have the potential to be efficacious in reducing the signs and symptoms of RA with relatively few side effects. Further research with better methodological standards are indicated to establish efficacy of the Ayurveda treatments.

\* [drqamarasinghe@hotmail.com](mailto:drqamarasinghe@hotmail.com)

Tel: 011 2694308