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## Turmeric supplement more effective than placebo for knee pain

In a new study from the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research, extract of *Curcuma longa*, commonly known as turmeric, was found to be more effective than a placebo for reducing knee pain in patients with knee osteoarthritis.

However, turmeric did not change the structural aspects of knee osteoarthritis, such as swelling or cartilage composition. These findings from a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial were today published in the prestigious journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Dr Benny Eathakkattu Antony, the principal investigator of the CurKOA trial and senior/corresponding author of the paper, said that despite the large numbers of people around the world who are diagnosed, there are no approved disease-modifying drugs currently available to treat osteoarthritis.

"Common treatments, such as paracetamol and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, have only mild to moderate effects and can have adverse side effects. Due to this, an urgent need exists for safer and more effective drugs to treat osteoarthritis".

"The study randomly assigned 70 participants with symptomatic knee osteoarthritis and ultrasound evidence of swelling inside the knee joint to receive either two capsules per day of turmeric or a matched placebo for 12 weeks to determine whether turmeric reduced knee symptoms and joint swelling. Changes were assessed by standardised questionnaire and MRI, respectively, over 12 weeks."

The researchers also looked for changes in cartilage composition, pain medication usage, quality of life, physical performance measures, and adverse events. After 12 weeks, they found that patients taking the turmeric supplements reported less pain than those in the placebo group with no adverse events.

Menzies Musculoskeletal Health and Disease Theme Leader and rheumatologist Professor Graeme Jones said that participants in the turmeric group consumed fewer pain medications compared to the participants in the placebo group. However, there was no difference in the structural aspects of knee osteoarthritis between the groups.

“Despite the positive findings, due to the modest effect of the turmeric, small sample size of the study, short-duration of follow-up and the single research centre, the researchers suggest that multicentre trials with larger sample sizes and long duration of follow-up are needed to assess the clinical significance of their findings.”

Link to paper: <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-0990>

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