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**Eleutherococcus senticosus reduces cardiovascular stress response in healthy subjects: a randomized, placebo-controlled trial.**

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The number of studies devoted to the scientific evaluation of phytotherapy is rapidly increasing since Western patients seem more oriented towards so-called “alternative medicine”. Bearing such arguments in mind we decided to address attention to Eleutherococcus senticosus, a root of the Ginseng family known for thousands of years in China as a remedy for psychological distress. Forty-five paid, healthy volunteers (20 males, 25 females) were recruited. Entry criteria were: good health, age 18-30 years, student and a Symptoms Rating Test score <10. At screening evaluation subjects were randomized to receive orally either placebo (Pl group) or Eleutherococcus senticosus (Es group) for 30 days, in a double-blind design. Subjects were submitted to a stressful cognitive task, the Stroop Colour – Word test (Stroop CW), both before and after treatment. Stroop CW increased heart rate (HR) and systolic BP in every subject. In females there was a greater response than in males in terms of both systolic and diastolic BP. For both genders, the HR response to Stroop CW was reduced by Es treatment while no changes were found after Pl. In females, systolic BP was also reduced in Es group while it remained unchanged in Pl group. This study demonstrated that treatment with Eleutherococcus senticosus is able to reduce cardiovascular response to stress in healthy young volunteers, while placebo was ineffective. Eleutherococcus senticosus is confirmed to be helpful for stress adaptation.

Key words: stress, cardiovascular response, Eleutherococcus senticosus, complementary medicine, sex dimorphism.