



# HerbClip™

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**FILE: ■ Saffron (*Crocus sativus*)**

**■ Depression**

**■ Imipramine**

**HC 100542-273**

**Date: January 31, 2005**

**RE: Clinical Trial Shows Efficacy for Saffron in the Treatment of Depression**

Akhondzadeh S, Fallah-Pour H, Afkham K, Jamshidi A-H, Khalighi-Cigaroudi F. Comparison of *Crocus sativus* L. and imipramine in the treatment of mild to moderate depression: a pilot double-blind randomized trial [ISRCTN45683816]. *BMC Complement Altern Med*. September 2, 2004;4(12)1-5.

Saffron is the dried stigma from the blossom of the *Crocus sativus* plant. It is used in Persian traditional medicine to treat inflammation, menstrual disorders, vomiting, and throat diseases. Although Persian medicinal textbooks recommend saffron for use in depression, there are no clinical trials to support its effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of saffron with the antidepressant drug imipramine in people with mild to moderate depression.

This study was a randomized, double-blind trial conducted by researchers at Roozbeh Psychiatric Hospital, Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Tehran, Iran. Thirty adults (18-25 years) who met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4<sup>th</sup> edition for major depression were randomly assigned to receive 100 mg imipramine or 10 mg dried saffron extract daily for 6 weeks. The dry saffron stigmas (Novin Zaferan Co., Mashhad, Iran) were milled, extracted with ethanol, and dried. Both the saffron and the imipramine were put into red capsules to mask their identity.

The subjects completed the standard Hamilton Rating Scales for Depression (HAM-D) and reported side effects several times during the study. After 6 weeks, subjects in both the imipramine and saffron groups had significant improvements in their HAM-D scores ( $P < 0.0001$ ). There was no significant difference in scores between the 2 groups at any point during the trial. Subjects in the imipramine group reported the side effects of sedation and dry mouth more often than subjects in the saffron group ( $P < 0.03$ ).

The authors conclude that saffron may be of therapeutic benefit in the treatment of mild to moderate depression. They discussed the limitations of this preliminary study,

including the lack of a placebo group, the small number of participants, and the short duration of treatment. Larger-scale clinical trials with placebo groups and varying doses of saffron should be conducted to further explore the antidepressant effects of saffron.

—*Heather S. Oliff, Ph.D.*

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