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A U of C treatment helps most Type II diabetics

Eleotin, a herbal remedy developed at the University of Calgary, offers dramatically improved control of blood glucose levels for most Type II diabetics, its promoters say.



"We did the original laboratory work," says Giwon Yoon, who chairs the U of C's diabetes research centre. "This remedy will restore near normalcy for 70% of Type II diabetics if it is employed within six months of onset in an adult subject."

Eleotin is manufactured by Eastwood Bio-Medical Research Inc. Youngsoo Kim, CEO of the Vancouver-based firm, was an assistant finance professor at the University of Alberta between 1987 and 1991. He says Eleotin, taken as a tea, has been in development for 19 years. "Progress was hampered by the extreme difficulty in locating a reliable supply for two herbs of the 12 that we use," Mr. Kim comments. "Only 10 to 20 boxes per month could be produced for

four years. Then last year we secured a supply source capable of sustaining monthly production at 5,000 to 6,000 boxes. A patient uses one box every one to two months."

Dr. Yoon is known for having identified a virus that causes Type I diabetes in laboratory animals. In this condition, the body's immune system destroys the pancreatic beta cells that secrete insulin. Type I sufferers, who cannot survive without insulin injections, account for 5% to 10% of all diabetics. The remainder are Type II, characterized by insulin resistance, inadequate insulin secretion or unhealthy insulin receptors. There are at least 90 million Type II diabetics in North America.

Eleotin employs what Dr. Yoon calls a combination approach, incorporating three herbal mixtures. "Used in isolation, a single pharmaceutical substance must often be administered in a strength that has toxic side effects," the scientist explains. "By combining other ingredients capable of enhancing the desired effect, dosage and

hence toxicity can sometimes be reduced. That is one reason for the success of this medicine." Among other benefits, the treatment often restores normal beta cell activity.

Eastwood, a private company, charges US\$300 per box. "The price is reasonable considering the medical benefit and limited supply," Mr. Kim comments. Dr. Yoon says most Type II diabetics who have suffered for three to five years will respond favourably if they take Eleotin for eight to 12 months. Eastwood reports that it commissioned a promising pilot test with 1,300 patients. "Very few herbal medicines have been subjected to scientific verification," Mr. Kim says. "Eleotin has." University Technologies International Inc., the U of C's commercial licensing arm, announced this month that it has licence the herbal treatment to Eastwood. Dr. Yoon says work is ongoing to locate precisely the right soil and climate conditions to grow the two rare plants in greater supply.