A randomised, cross-over, placebo-controlled study of Aloe Vera in patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome: Effects on patient quality of life

HA Hutchings, K Wareham, JN Baxter, P Atherton, JGC Kingham, P Duane, L Thomas, M Thomas, CK Ch’ng, JG Williams

BACKGROUND
Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic functional gastrointestinal condition causing a broad range of symptoms and is difficult to treat. The efficacy of Aloe vera in treating the symptoms of IBS has yet to be proven and the purpose of this study was to determine if this treatment is effective in improving quality of life in patients with IBS.

METHODS
A multi-centre, double-blind, cross-over and placebo controlled study design was used. Patients were randomised to receive either Aloe vera for five months followed by a wash-out period then placebo for five months or placebo followed by Aloe vera.

Patient quality of life was measured using patient completed disease specific (Gastrointestinal Symptoms Rating Score and the Irritable Bowel Syndrome Quality of Life Questionnaire) and generic (EuroQol and SF-12) quality of life tools.

RESULTS
Cross-over analysis identified that there were no significant differences between treatment A and B with respect to the generic SF-12 or EQ-5D scores (p> 0.05 for all comparisons). Similarly, no significant differences were found between treatment A and B with respect to the disease specific scores generated from the GSRS and IBSQOL (p> 0.05 for all comparisons). See Figures 2-6.

DISCUSSION
This study was unable to show that the Aloe vera was superior to placebo in improving any aspect of patient quality of life using generic or disease specific tools following the treatment of symptoms associated with IBS.