

Glaxo Grant

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Trees growing on the Caribbean island of Trinidad may help medical researchers develop treatment for irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia.

Dr. John Sutko, associate professor of pharmacology at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, is studying how ryanodine, a chemical extracted from the ground stem wood of the South American shrub *Ryania speciosa*, affects muscle contractions.

Calcium is essential for muscle contraction and ryanodine alters the levels of calcium inside muscle cells, Dr. Sutko explained. By studying how ryanodine acts, he and his collaborators are able to investigate the role of specific proteins in muscle function.

Normal muscle function must be studied to understand abnormal functions, such as arrhythmia, Dr. Sutko pointed out.

The research is funded by a \$750,000 three-year grant from Glaxo Inc., an international pharmaceutical company. Dr. Sutko is collaborating with Judith Nichol and Dr. Syed Ahmad at UNR; Dr. Luc Ruest of the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec, Canada; and Dr. Koert Gerzon of the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, IN.

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Written by Jeanne Lauf