St. John's wort (Hypericum perforatum)  
*(saynt jonz wort)*

**Other Names:**
Amber, Demon chaser, Goatweed, Hardhay, Klamath weed, Rosin rose, Tipton weed

**Classification**
Therapeutic: antidepressants

**Common Uses**
- **PO:** Management of mild to moderate depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). (Not effective for major depression.)
- **Topical:** Inflammation of the skin, blunt injury, wounds and burns. Other uses are for capillary strengthening, decreasing uterine bleeding, and reducing tumor size.

**Action**
Derived from *Hypericum perforatum*; the active component is hypericin.

- **PO:** Anti-depressant action may be due to ability to inhibit reuptake of serotonin and other neurotransmitters.
- **Topical:** Anti-inflammatory, antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial properties.

**Therapeutic Effects:**
- **PO:** Decreased signs and symptoms of depression.
- **Topical:** Decreased inflammation of burns or other wounds.

**Pharmacokinetics**
- **Absorption:** Unknown.
- **Distribution:** Unknown.
- **Metabolism and Excretion:** Unknown.
- **Half-life:** Hypericum constituents—24.8–26.5 hr.

**TIME/ACTION PROFILE**
- **ROUTE**
- **ONSET**
- **PEAK**
- **DURATION**
  - PO: 10–14 days, within 4–6 wk

**Contraindications/Precautions**
Contraindicated in:  
- Pregnancy, lactation, or children.

Use Cautiously in:  
- History of phototoxicity; Surgery (discontinue 2 weeks prior to surgical procedures); Alzheimer's disease (may induce psychosis); Patients undergoing general anesthesia (may cause cardiovascular collapse); History of suicidal attempt, severe depression, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder (can induce hypomania or psychosis).

**Adverse Reactions/Side Effects**
- **CNS:** Dizziness, confusion, sleep disturbances.  
- **CV:** Hypertension.
- **Endo:** Hypoglycemia.
- **GI:** Abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, dry mouth, feeling of fullness, flatulence, nausea, vomiting.  
- **Derm:** Allergic skin reactions (hives, itching, skin rash), phototoxicity.  
- **Neuro:** Neuropathy.  
- **Derm:** Allergic skin reactions (hives, itching, skin rash), phototoxicity.

**Interactions**
Natural Product-Drug: Concurrent use with alcohol or other antidepressants (including SSRIs and MAO inhibitors) may *q* risk of adverse CNS reactions. May "p" the effectiveness and serum concentrations of digoxin, alprazolam, amitriptyline, imatinib, irinotecan, warfarin, and protease inhibitors. Use with MAO inhibitors tramadol, pentazocine, and selective serotonin agonists could result in serotonin syndrome. May "p" effectiveness of oral contraceptives. May "q" plasma cyclosporine and tacrolimus levels by 30–70% and cause acute transplant rejection. May "p" metabolism of phenytoin and phenobarbital and cause loss of seizure control. Blood levels of St. John’s Wort and MAO Inhibitors within 2 wk of each other.

**Route/Commonly Used Doses**
- **PO (Adults):**  
  - Mild Depression—300 mg of St. John’s Wort (standardized to 0.3% hypericin) 3 times daily or 250 mg twice daily of 0.2% hypericin extract.  
  - OCD—450 mg twice daily of extended release preparation.

**NURSING IMPLICATIONS**
- **Assessment:**  
  - Depression: Assess patient for depression periodically during therapy.
  - Inflammation: Assess skin or skin lesions periodically during therapy.

**Potential Nursing Diagnoses**
- Ineffective coping (Indications)
- Anxiety (Indications)
- Deficient knowledge, related to medication regimen (Patient/Family Teaching)

**Client Education**
- Use Cautiously in clients with a history of photosensitivity, surgery, or known photosensitivity to ultraviolet light.
- Avoid photosensitive agents (antidepressants, SSRIs, phototherapy).
- Avoid concurrent use of alcohol or other antidepressants.
- Avoid concurrent use with MAO inhibitors; discontinue 2 weeks prior to surgical procedures.
- Avoid use of St. John’s Wort and MAO Inhibitors within 2 wk of each other.

- Discontinue therapy if phototoxicity occurs.
Implementation

- **PO:** Tea can be prepared by mixing 2-4 dried herb in 150 mL of boiling water and steeping for 10 min.

**Patient/Family Teaching**

- Instruct patient to take St. John’s wort as directed.
- Patients with depression should be evaluated by health care professional. Standard therapy may be of greater benefit for moderate to severe depression.
- Advise patient to notify health care professional of medication regimen prior to treatment or surgery.
- Caution patients to avoid sun exposure and use protective sunscreen to reduce the risk of photosensitive reactions.
- Instruct patient to purchase herbs from a reputable source and that products and their contents vary among different manufacturers.
- Caution patient not to use alcohol while taking St. John’s wort.
- Warn patients that St. John’s Wort may reduce the therapeutic effectiveness of several drugs.
- May potentiate effect of sedatives and side effects of other antidepressants. Do not take within 2 wk of St John’slinoleum therapy.
- Instruct patient to consult health care professional prior to taking herbal, OTC, or herbal products concurrently with St. John’s wort.
- Instruct patient to purchase herbs from a reputable source and that products and their contents vary among different manufacturers.

**Evaluation**

- Decrease in signs and symptoms of depression or anxiety.
- Improvement in skin inflammation.

Why was this drug prescribed for your patient?