
Preface

Sales of herbal products have increased dramatically over the past five years. Unfortunately, the knowledge base devoted to the adverse effects of these products has not grown in proportion to their increased usage. Data of questionable accuracy, often designed to sell products rather than to provide objective information, can be found in the print and electronic media, most notably on the Internet. Even in medical journals, misleading information about the beneficial and adverse effects of herbs can be found.

Toxicology and Clinical Pharmacology of Herbal Products is designed to provide medical examiners, toxicologists, and health care providers with an objective review of the available information on the pharmacology and toxicology of commonly used herbs. Clinical and pathological findings from case reports of herbal adverse effects are described in detail. Sections on the relevant pharmacokinetics, chemical analysis, and analysis of biofluids are unique to this volume, and will be of use to pathologists and forensic scientists, as well as to clinicians. Animal, human, and in vitro data are presented on the known pharmacologic and toxicologic effects of each herb, arranged by organ, organ system, or therapeutic/toxicologic effect. A good deal of pharmacology and therapeutics information is included in this section, not only because toxicology is an extension of pharmacology, but also to make the book useful for a wide variety of applications by professionals with various interests. Adverse effects noted in clinical trials are noted in this section as well. At the end of the book, a summary table lists herbal toxicities by affected organ, provides a list of herbs involved in drug interactions, and indicates the type of data supporting the reported toxicities.

Each herbal monograph begins with a discussion of the herb's uses, products, and the dosage forms available. This information, in conjunction with color photographs¹ of some of the most popular products, can be of assistance in those situations where the identity of an herbal product is in question.

A chapter on the legal aspects of herbal products provides an overview of the regulation of herbal products in the US and abroad. In addition, each herbal monograph reviews the herb's status internationally, including approved uses.

The incidence of adverse effects associated with the use of herbal products is unknown, and may be underreported. Without a foundation of knowledge upon which to inquire whether an herbal product might be the cause of a given finding, further exploration of the possibility of an herb-induced toxicity might not be undertaken. Even if an herbal product is suspected of causing an adverse outcome, without information about similar cases, toxicological analysis of biofluids, or the pharmacologic or toxicologic effects of the herb, further investigation might prove difficult or impossible. *Toxicology and Clinical Pharmacology of Herbal Products* is designed to provide the necessary knowledge base upon which such investigations may efficaciously proceed.

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¹I want to acknowledge Mark Branciaroli of Elkins, WV for producing the photographs of the herbal products.



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