

Erratum - "Methylated Flavones from *Conoclidium greggii*"

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Major Medicinal Plants of India. R.S. THAKUR, H.S. PURI, and AKHTAR HUSAIN. Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, P.O. Bag No. 1, RSM Nagar, Lucknow 226016, India. 1989. x+585 pp. 15.5×23 cm. \$150.00

Major Medicinal Plants of India is an important, highly useful, and recommended compendium of data on the chemical constituents, biological activity, and folk and traditional medicinal uses of approximately 145 species. The plants are arranged alphabetically by genus and species (not by family), and each plant is accompanied by a list of literature references (preponderantly on chemical composition), as well as a good line drawing and often an additional color photograph.

While I concur that "one of the significant points of the present volume is a listing of uses of plants in the two main traditional systems, viz., Ayurveda and Unani, which is not found in other books" (authors' Preface), this point is really only technically met and is demonstrated only by the indication of local names of such folk preparations in which the plant is an ingredient. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no discussion whatsoever of the characteristics which make the Ayurveda and Unani systems of medicine unique, or even relevant to India. The Ayurveda (early traditional Indian) and Unani (of Greek origin) systems are by no means common knowledge outside of India. However, we realize of course that compounds and formulations in both Ayurveda and Unani continue to be under serious scrutiny, and attempts at standardization are made due to the continued wide popularity of the two systems. The book ends with an "Index of Chemical Constituents," but lacks an index to species names; the latter would have been useful if for no other reason than to find synonyms, which are indeed supplied where appropriate in the text.

Among the interesting plants discussed in *Major Medicinal Plants of India* are the cholesterol reducer (hypolipidemic) *Commiphora wightii* (Burseraceae) whose properties are referenced in 19 articles; *Sophora japonica* Fabaceae) with rutin as an antihemorrhagic agent (12 articles); 46 references to the chemistry of vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*, Poaceae); the South American quinine plant (*Cinchona* spp., Rubiaceae); *Centella asiatica* (Apiaceae) providing a drug to improve the mental activity of mentally retarded children, with 28 references to the plant's chemistry; and even the common but very useful celery (*Apium graveolens*, Apiaceae), which is accorded 20 pertinent chemical references.

One may thank the authors for bringing *Berberis insignis* to our attention. This member of the barberry family (Berberidaceae) has been omitted throughout the lineage of the previous major compendia, presumably because it is not actually or literally employed by the people in folk medicine. Its constituent umbellatine is more effective than berberine against *Leishmania tropica*. The specific inhibiting action of umbellatine, being more intensive than berberine (though of similar action) has been known since 1944 and successfully treats the form of leishmaniasis known as "Oriental sore." Thus we may be pleased that this Eastern Himalayan endemic is treated by the authors of *Major Medicinal Plants of India*, for tropical deforestation has been causing the migration of forest-inhabiting sandfly vectors of leishmaniasis into areas of human habitation in the neotropics and perhaps elsewhere, and this plant may be a new source of hope warranting detailed investigation.

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ERRATUM

For the paper by Martinez-Vazquez *et al.* entitled "Methylated Flavones from *Conoclidium greggii*," *J. Nat. Prod.*, **56**, 1410 (1993), the title plant should be *Conoclinium greggii*.