Book Review

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The Pharmacology of Chinese Herbs, KEE CHANG HUANG. CRC Press, Inc., 2000 Corporate Blvd., N.W., Boca Raton, FL 33431. 1993. xxii+396 pp. 17.5 cm×25.25 cm. $144.00. ISBN 0-8493-4915-X.

In this work, the author has aimed to bring together ancient Chinese herbal lore and modern Western scientific methods. Traditional Chinese medicine has existed in China for more than 4000 years and is one of its most remarkable contributions to civilization. This researcher-oriented book has examined the extensive scientific materials that have been published in China on the isolation and identification of the components of important herbal medicines during the past four decades and contains the contemporary research data for more than 300 Chinese herbs, which have been classified according to 39 pharmacological actions. These broad actions are related to cardiovascular, nervous, alimentary, respiratory, genitourinary, hematopoietic, and endocrine systems and to chemotherapy. Each herbal medicine is described in terms of its chemical constituents, pharmacological action, toxicity, and therapeutic uses. This classification is different from that used in most Chinese books on herbal medicine but will be more easily accepted by Western scientists.

In Section I, the author explains many of the most important terms used in Chinese herbal medicine (for example, "Yin," "Yan," and "Qi"). These definitions will allow a non-Chinese reader to clearly understand the terminology of this discipline. Section II offers a clear and concise overview of Chinese medicine. This arrangement will be very helpful for entry-level researchers. The herbal systems are then described in the remaining sections of the book, divided first into the eight broad systems listed above and then into chapters relating to usage.

Some drawbacks in this volume should be pointed out. While many of the herbs (for example, ginseng) are covered in great depth, others lack pertinent or up-to-date literature.

Secondly, many chemical structures and formulae are incorrect, with errors in stereochemistry or substitution patterns. (Some examples are artemisinin, p. 343; eupatolide, eupaformonin, and eupaformosanin, p. 348; and bruceantin, p. 358.) Also, new research data, such as anti-HIV tannins from *Punica granatum*, or important herbal classes, such as Huang Qi (*Radix astragali*), have not been included. A revised edition prepared with the addition of natural products expertise would be quite helpful for an update of structures and references.

The present book is still a valuable resource and succeeds in its goal to help the Western scientist understand ancient Chinese herbal medicine from the viewpoint of modern pharmacology.

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