

## Book Reviews

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**Pharmacodynamic Basis of Herbal Medicine.** By M. Ebadi (University of North Dakota). CRC Press, Boca Raton. 2002. xxviii + 726 pp. 17.5 × 25 cm. \$129.95. ISBN 0-8493-0743-0.

This hardbound book promises to build a scientific bridge between Eastern and Western medicine by showing how commonly used herbal medications work at the molecular level. Unfortunately the book falls far short of this promise and provides few insights into the pharmacodynamics of herbal medicine. Limited information is provided on the mechanism of action of specific botanicals, and practically no information is presented on pharmacokinetics. The book suffers from a lack of adequate referencing with only 117 references.

The text is divided into 60 chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of over 30 alternative therapies with general statements about each and a total of two references to Time-Life publications. Chapter 2 is a brief overview of herbal therapy with a list of plants with purported therapeutic uses and no references to support any statements. Chapter 3 is a general discussion of vitamins and diet with two references to Readers Digest publications. Chapter 4 is an overview of dietary antioxidants that again is poorly referenced with no references for specific data. Chapter 5 is a cursory discussion on potential food–drug interactions with a focus on grapefruit juice. Chapter 6 contains a list of potential herb–drug interactions in two tables with information taken from a single review article. Chapter 7 is a poorly referenced overview of the importance of natural products as a source of existing and new drugs.

The remaining 53 chapters are a mixture of monographs on specific botanicals and pharmacology primers on conditions such as congestive heart failure and diabetes. These chapters typically contain a limited and variable amount of information on specific botanicals and a pharmacology overview. For example, Chapter 35, entitled “Plants and Diabetes”, has a list of 15 plants that may have antidiabetic activity with no references or mention of possible mechanisms of action. This information takes up about half a page of the 10-page chapter. Chapter 36, entitled “Hypericum (St. John’s Wort) and Depression”, contains a brief overview of hypericum followed by an 11-page overview of depression. Chapter 54, entitled “Sponges and Steroids”, has a 2-page overview of steroids that have been isolated from sponges and a 21-page discussion of steroid pharmacology.

*Pharmacodynamic Basis of Herbal Medicine* cannot be recommended for the readers of *Journal of Natural Products*. The book contains limited useful information on the pharmacodynamics of herbal medicine, and pharmacology information is available in other standard texts.

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