

Review of Herbal Medicines. 3rd Edition

Herbal Medicines. 3rd Edition. By J. Barnes (University of Auckland), L. A. Anderson (Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency), and J. D. Phillipson (University of London). Pharmaceutical Press, London. 2007. 710 pp. 9 × 11 in. \$150.00. ISBN 978-0-85369-623-0.

Those familiar with the first edition of this book, published over 10 years ago, will find this edition remarkably changed. Many new monographs have been added, including ones not common in the UK, but of importance elsewhere. An initial chapter on “How to Use Herbal Medicines”, which explains the general monograph organization, a 26-page introduction, with comments on herbal medicines in general, tables of adverse events and herbs to be avoided during pregnancy, and a list of 240+ supportive references/reviews begin the text. The chemistry of the constituents is very briefly explored, with details of almost all the structures of an herb’s purported active constituents found in its monograph. Finally this section ends with a comprehensive list of almost 90 general references (to mid-2007) that support the monographs.

The text is true to the book’s title, doing a fine service to the profession in describing over 150 botanical supplements. This reviewer particularly valued the monograph sections that described chemical constituents, pharmacopoeial and other monographs available for additional information, dosage, and pharmacological actions (*in vitro*, animal studies, and clinical studies, if applicable). The descriptions on contra-indications, warnings, and drug interactions are current through early 2007. As these areas change rapidly, readers are cautioned to check a more recent compendium. Also with each monograph are pictures of the plant and the dried substance most likely to be found in commerce. No information on microscopic identification characteristics is provided.

The text is concluded with five appendices providing potential drug interactions; pharmacological activities and constituents by therapeutic categories; the Council of Europe’s categories for natural sources of flavorings; a preparations directory (36 pages); a suppliers’ directory (29 pages); and, finally, a comprehensive index including Latin binomials (20 pages).

This is an error-free text rich in information for the professional, student, and public. It should be found in public and educational libraries, as well as those pharmacies that desire to provide professional counseling for their patients in this area. Additionally, academics who seek a reliable source for information on botanical supplements for their teaching activities should find this very useful. Although the book is expensive, the details in the text justify its cost. The authors are to be congratulated on their efforts.

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