

SUGGESTIONS FOR PHARMACOPOEIAL REVISION.*

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The revision of the U. S. Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary is a work that should be conducted with the greatest possible care. Both being legal standards, or the law of the land, everything before being therein incorporated should be carefully weighed and considered, so that such standards as may be adopted shall be reasonable and rational and not likely to work hardship or injustice to the different interests they affect, medical, pharmaceutical, commercial, and also in the last analysis—the public. It will be conceded that all who make use of the Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary are only too anxious to meet the requirements laid down. It is a source of worry and anxiety not to be able to do so just because some of the standards are either not sufficiently specific or altogether too high. In many instances goods, particularly botanicals, cannot be had to meet all the tests; in some instances so little of an article meeting the test is available as to make the price of it prohibitive.

In former revisions there has been a tendency to introduce innovations—too much so. No objections can be raised against the introduction of real improvements, that is, in the line of progress. But there is no sense in every now and then changing the formula of a preparation to meet the whim or fancy of some pedant. Why should preparations of acknowledged merit, which have stood the test of years and which are fixed in the minds of the physicians, be subjected to constant alterations in formulae? Why should a household remedy with which the public has been long familiar be made the subject of criticism and be altered so that it is not recognizable by those who have been accustomed to use it. Nor does it appear advisable to include in the Pharmacopoeia products under names with which but few are familiar and which are rarely prescribed under the official designation. Phenylcinchoninic acid is a case in point.

In some instances the product commercially available falls short of pharmacopoeial requirements in some one particular, one which little, if at all, affects its therapeutic value. Oil of Sweet Almonds, for instance, is usually deficient in the saponification number. It may vary only a few points. Every other test may indicate it to be of absolute purity and good quality, yet according to the present standard it would have to be rejected. To secure the little when it is to be had that meets the requirements in full means paying a premium. And in these precarious times when supplies are inadequate anyway and prices abnormally high is it the part of wisdom to maintain so extreme a standard?

In a former revision of the Pharmacopoeia a standard for *Quinine* was set which was based on extreme laboratory requirements. The product manufactured in large quantities to meet the demand naturally failed to come up to the official standard. Had this high standard been insisted upon it would have barred the manufacture of *Quinine* on a large scale. The price of any that might have met this test would have been so high as to drive it out of use.

The commotion caused during the war period by the skyrocketing cost of *Potassium Salts* brought into use *Sodium Bicarbonate* in making *Solution of Mag-*

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nesium Citrate. Here a beneficial change was made. The use of either *Sodium* or *Potassium* might be made optional.

Sapo Mollis (Soft Soap).—The product used for generations under the name of *Green Soap* was made from Linseed Oil. Cottonseed Oil Soap is no improvement. The old-fashioned *Green Soap* appears to be preferred by the practitioner and pharmacist because of greater uniformity in appearance and consistency. Tincture prepared from it appears to better satisfy the physician and public. Would it be amiss to restore it?

Ointment of Zinc Oxide.—The use of Mutton Tallow in place of lard is recommended. It is less liable to rancidity.

Solution of Iron Albuminate.—Because of lack of stability and the fact that it is little prescribed would it not be policy to delete it?

Mustard (Sinapis Alba), White.—The Pharmacopoeia states that White Mustard does not yield "allyl isothiocyanate upon distillation with steam." This is evidently an erroneous statement as the bulk of White Mustard yields Synthetic Oil Mustard upon distillation with steam, usually as much as the requirements for Black Mustard. It would seem that a White Mustard corresponding with the Pharmacopoeial requirements in this particular would be practically inert.

Compound Spirit of Ether, N. F.—The so-called *Ethereal Oil* required for the purpose is practically unobtainable. It would appear that this could well be changed to *Spirits Ether*, omitting the *Ethereal Oil*, and have the term *Hoffman's Anodyne* or *Hoffman's Drops* apply thereto.

Botanical Drugs.—It is also suggested that on such drugs the standard for ash content be revised. The following list shows the official standard compared with the average percentage of ash found in supplies obtainable in the market:

AVERAGE ASH PERCENTAGES OF MARKET DRUGS
COMPARED WITH OFFICIAL ASH STANDARDS.

Aconite Root, U. S. P.—0.05% ether soluble alkaloids of Aconite. Average, 0.45.

Aletris Root, N. F.—Not over 16% Ash. Average, 25% ash.

Beth Root, N. F.—Not over 5% Ash. Average, 7% Ash.

Culver's Root, N. F.—Not over 12% Ash. Average, 22.90% Ash.

Damiana Herb, N. F.—Not over 10% Ash. Average, 12.85% Ash.

Dandelion Root, U. S. P.—Not over 10% Ash. Average, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % Ash.

Echinacea Root, N. F.—Not over 6% Ash. Average, 6.50% Ash.

Euphorbia Pilulifera, N. F.—Not over 12% Ash. Average, 13.60% Ash.

Fringe Tree Bark of Root, N. F.—Not over 5% Ash. Average, 10.75% Ash.

Helonias Root, N. F.—Not over 5% Ash. Average, 19.55% Ash.

Hydrangea Root, N. F.—Not over 3% Ash. Average, 5.25% Ash.

Koussou, N. F.—Not over 9% Ash. Average, 17.50% Ash.

Licorice Root, Spanish or Italian, unpeeled, U. S. P.—Not over 7% Ash. Average, 10.50% Ash.

(The Pharmacopoeia requirements evidently apply to Russian Peeled Licorice Root.)

Lobelia Herb, U. S. P.—Not over 8% Ash. Average, 10.85% Ash.

Mace, N. F.—Not over 3% Ash. Average, 4.25% Ash.

Mandrake Root, U. S. P.—Not over 3% Ash. Average, 10% Ash.

Myrrh Gum, U. S. P.—Not less than 35% soluble. Not over 8.5% Ash. Average, 30% Soluble. Average, 12% Ash.

Soap Bark, N. F.—Not over 10% Ash. Average, 12.35% Ash.

Valerian Root, U. S. P.—Not over 20% Ash. Average, 25% Ash.

Wild Indigo Root, N. F.—Not over 5% Ash. Average, 6% Ash.

Yellow Dock Root, N. F.—Not over 10% Ash. Average, 18% Ash.

Etc., etc.