

Review by Douglas MacKay, ND

Mosby's Handbook of Herbs and Supplements and Their Therapeutic Uses

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Mosby Inc.; 11830 Westline Industrial Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63146

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Steven Bratman, the Consulting Editor of Complementary and Alternative Medicine for HealthGate Data Corp., the electronic publisher of *The Natural Pharmacist*, and Andrea Girman, former Associate Medical Director for *The Natural Pharmacist*, have put their heads together for this quick-reference, evidence-based guide to herbs and supplements. Conveniently packaged as a pocket-sized paperback, this book provides at-a-glance information on approximately 85 herbs, 80 supplements, and 75 common conditions.

The “Handbook” is the result of a research program that analyzed and reviewed 10,000 studies on natural medicine for scientific accuracy. The authors have developed a strength-of-evidence scale that ranks therapies from +4 to –2, with +4 indicating multiple double-blind trials of satisfactory design and size and –2 indicating moderate to large negative double-blind trials. The clinical evidence rating scale also includes an X modifier, which indicates that evidence available is challenged in a study of similar design and size.

The clinical evidence rating scale offers an objective format to evaluate botanical and nutritional therapies. Additionally, the authors include a section titled “other proposed natural therapies” for each condition. This section gives a brief synopsis, or in some cases a laundry list, of herbs and supplements that have little or no research to support their use. Without this section, commonly used and clinically effective herbs and supplements would have been omitted from the “Handbook.”

The book is designed for the conventionally trained healthcare practitioner with no formal training in the use of herbs or supplements to make rational recommendations to patients. The authors effectively highlight dosage, product quality information, safety, and drug-herb-supplement interactions. The drug-herb-supplement interactions are organized into three tables per condition: natural therapies often prescribed for the condition and their potential interaction with pharmaceuticals, pharmaceuticals prescribed for a condition and potential herb or supplement interactions, and pharmaceuticals and natural therapies with potential supportive interactions.

The knowledge base on botanicals and nutrients changes so rapidly that even the most experienced alternative healthcare practitioner will find this handbook useful. The book is well referenced, organized, and concise, allowing a practitioner to quickly scan and access evidence on natural therapies, including important safety and drug-herb-nutrient interactions. *Mosby's Handbook of Herbs and Supplements and Their Therapeutic Uses* serves as a reliable resource for the busy practitioner who has little time to conduct his or her own research.