

Review by Douglas MacKay, ND

Clinical Botanical Medicine

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The prescribing and dispensing information compiled between the covers of *Clinical Botanical Medicine* is refreshing. Serving as a counterpoint to the multitude of botanical books that explain the use of herbs solely on a constituent-based approach, *Clinical Botanical Medicine* goes beyond using plants or plant constituents merely as drug substitutes. The authors combine traditional wisdom, scientific literature, and expert insight for a deep and complex, yet practical, approach to botanical prescribing.

Section one provides detailed information on using botanicals to treat or prevent specific diseases and conditions. It includes major categories such as cancer, hypertension, diabetes, depression, sports injuries, dermatological conditions, and pregnancy and lactation. Section two presents a detailed explanation of a few specialty formulas designed to treat conditions, including intractable epilepsy, *Helicobacter pylori*, and parasitic infections. Section three explores in greater detail information on the history, botany, phytochemistry, clinical application, and safety of eight commonly used plants.

Section four is a unique look at current issues in botanical medicine, and delves into political aspects of herbal prescribing that are often ignored. The authors explore how, “researchers, manufacturers, bureaucrats, and professors without clinical experience or training in botanical medicine are shaping public opinion on the safety of herbs.” A discussion of botanicals such as chaparral, lobelia, wormwood, belladonna, and kava is provided from the point of view of experienced clinicians.

The appendix provides practitioners with information about legitimate herbal training programs and important questions to help identify high-quality herbal products. Readers are encouraged to ask manufacturers about the source and age of raw materials, how plant material is identified and screened for contaminants, and information regarding sustainable harvesting of plants.

Practitioners looking beyond the “cookbook approach” to botanical prescribing will find *Clinical Botanical Medicine* a valuable addition to their working library.