

Review by Kathleen A. Head, ND

The ABC Clinical Guide to Herbs

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The ABC Clinical Guide to Herbs provides a comprehensive monograph on 29 of the most common herbs used by consumers. The book is designed for health care practitioners and has been approved as a continuing education course in botanical medicine for dietitians (Commission on Dietetic Registration for 12 CE hours), naturopathic physicians (Oregon Board of Naturopathic Physicians for 12 CE hours), nurses (Texas Nurses Association accredited by ANCC for 10 CE hours), pharmacists (Texas Pharmacy Association accredited by ACPE for 12 contact hours), and physicians (Texas Medical Association accredited by ACCME for 13.5 category-1 hours). Learning objectives are provided at the beginning of the book and a self-test is provided at the end, with applications for CE for each health provider category mentioned.

The book is dedicated to the late Varro Tyler, PhD, who was instrumental in the initial development of the book. An extensive introduction provides the reader with information on consumer information, standardization of herbs, regulatory information on botanicals, and interpreting product labels.

The botanicals covered in this book were chosen because they are the most popular herbs purchased in retail markets. Each monograph provides a one-page summary designed as a patient information sheet, suitable for copying. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of uses, dosages, contraindications, adverse effects, drug interactions, pharmacological actions, mechanisms of action, standardization, regulatory status, and clinical overview. The information is well referenced and each chapter ends with a chart summarizing the clinical studies on that particular herb. In addition to single botanical monographs, there are several monographs on proprietary herbal combination products that have been the subject of clinical research.

Because scientific inquiry into botanical medicine is moving forward at a rapid pace, several studies have been published since the monographs in the book were written; the citations for these more recent studies are noted in the book's appendix. For those looking for scientific validation of botanical medicine, this is an extremely valuable reference book.