

"Herbal" Doesn't Necessarily Mean "Safe"

The traditional use of many indigenous and exotic medicinal plants is the subject of important drug research. There is usually a trend in the usage of a certain plant. If a plant has been used in a specific way for a specific purpose for a long time and this recipe is replicated in different geographical areas, there is a need to take a closer look at it. Ethnobotany is a rapidly growing industry that helps drug researchers focus on often-used herbs first and what diseases they can successfully cure. Many modern disorders and old conditions have been matched with certain plants used in tropics and developing nations however, there has not been any strong medical claims that herbal plants have been clinically proven to absolutely cure or effectively treat these diseases. Eighty percent of the world's population is estimated by the World Health Organization to still depend mainly on herbal treatments for their primary health care. Most indigenous people are credited with the discovery of the medicinal uses of more than three-quarters of the plant-derived medicines that we use today. Yet, most of the "evolved" drugs developed by large companies are still out of the financial reach of the working classes and the poor in who live in developing nations and in the rainforest areas. The sad truth is, pharmaceutical drugs are not exactly getting any cheaper. People in the Third World like the tuk-tuk driver who earns the equivalent of \$40 U.S. monthly to support a family of five can no longer afford the sophisticated drugs and yet still has to face the same maladies as people in developed nations do. It is natural, then, to turn to plant-based medicines and concoctions because they are often the most available and fitting treatments for a wide diversity of health problems experienced by most of the world's populations. Usually, these populations cultivate wild medicinal plants in and around their homes. In their village, there is a shared knowledge on how to go about treating common fevers, infections, respiratory problems, stomach troubles, body pain and even snake bites. People in tropical forests and in many of the poorer parts of the world have long ago learned to use the plants growing in their backyards as their primary health care system. Some archaeologists have even discovered the remains of dried plants used as medicine at sites in South America that date back to 8000 B.C. In the upper regions of the Amazon alone, at least 1,200 species of trees and herbs have been used to create drugs do certo or "wilderness drugs" to treat common illnesses in these regions today. So many of these drugs have proven to be amazingly effective, yet most of them still await scientific research and validation. True, many of them would rather pop a convenient aspirin or two for a simple headache instead of going through the tedious motions to harvesting some leaves, roots, or bark out of the still-dangerous forest before finally boiling it all into a headache remedy. Still, they have little choice in the matter as even aspirin is unavailable and still far too expensive for some village and forest dwellers. If you are thinking about going the herbal route to treat an ailment, remember that just because traditional herbal medicine and remedies are often used by indigenous people, they are in no way intended to replace conventional medicine and drugs completely. Many people rely on herbal remedies mainly because of socioeconomic factors or simple unavailability of modern medicine. It is never advisable to just use herbs and replace or avoid proper medical care altogether. Balance is important. Conventional medicine and traditional medicine should ideally complement each other for your benefit. One system does not substitute the other. Always seek the advice and help of your health care professional if you are interested in a natural remedy no matter how unremarkable your condition may be. There are already many doctors with practical medical backgrounds as well as education and experience with traditional medicine. It is crucial that you and your doctor verify both conventional and complementary products and therapies. This is also true for future herbal supplements and recommendations that you plan to take. There are many books on natural medicine and there are plenty of good sites on the internet as well where you can do some research on your own. Also, always remember that many medicinal plants have biological properties and active chemicals that should be treated with care and respect. Just because they are natural, it does not mean they are absolutely safe - some plants can be poisonous if taken in the wrong amounts. Some herbs DO have side effects and most have little research on them about their appropriate dosage and contraindications to drugs that your doctor has prescribed.

About the Author

Information for students, prospective students and researchers. Employment listings, research facilities and health information. Located.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>