

Book review

Rational Phytotherapy (A Physicians' Guide to Herbal Medicine),

Volker Schulz, Rudolf Hänsel and Varro Tyler, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, Germany, 2001. 90 figures and 50 tables, 383 pp. ISBN 3-540-67096-3; DM 78 (hardcover)

This book is intended to help physicians and pharmacists interested in treatment with herbal remedies. It is based on the German Pharmacopoeia and includes only plants that are approved by the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices of this country. Consequently, the plants included have been shown to be safe and there is some scientific and clinical evidence of their efficacy.

The book is divided into the following chapters:

1. Medicinal Plants, Phytomedicines and Phytotherapy
2. Central Nervous System
3. Cardiovascular System
4. Respiratory System
5. Digestive System
6. Urinary Tract
7. Gynecologic Indications for Herbal Remedies
8. Skin, Trauma, Rheumatism, and Pain
9. Agents that Increase Resistance to Diseases

The book begins with a general introduction on phytomedicines and phytotherapy. It is quite comprehensive, and includes very useful information about extractions, preparations, prescriptions, medicinal teas and other information. Each chapter starts with a brief description about the effect of phytomedicines on the

respective organ system. This is followed by a description of several diseases and by a review of the plants used for these conditions.

The information given is divided into the most commonly and well documented plants used, which are discussed in some detail and a few data on some lesser-known species. The data for the main plant species is very well documented and complete, including botanical, phytochemical, pharmacological and clinical information, as well as the number of preparations included in the Red List (Rote Liste, Germany).

Overall the main strength of this book lies in the wealth of information about active and proven efficacious plants. However, it lacks a cross-linked index with common and scientific names of the plants. This should be remedied in any future edition. This book is a good guide for physicians who want an introduction to the prescription of phytomedicines, but it also will be helpful to pharmacists, ethnopharmacologists and anyone else interested in phytomedicines. The price makes it available for everyone and it is excellent value for money.

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