

Herbal drugs: past, present and future scenario in India

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Abstract

Medicinal plants have been used since ancient times and are regarded all over the world as a rich source of therapeutic agents for the prevention of diseases and ailments. Ancient literatures have documented that indigenous herbs had been used by cultures like Chinese, Japanese, African, Latin American and Southeast Asia in their healing rituals. The consumption of plant-based medicines in the West has increased manifold in recent years. Ayurvedic medicines in India, Kampo Medicine in Japan, Unani medicine in the Middle East and traditional Chinese medicine are still being used by a large majority of people. The medicinal use of herbs decreased rapidly in the West since the introduction of more predictable synthetic drugs with their fast effects and easy availability. However, it has also been observed that some plants are not safe for consumption and are liable to elicit adverse effects. As a result of increasing demand for herbal medicines, there are increasing concerns about the safety, standardization, efficacy and quality of herbal products by health professionals as well as the general public. Improvement in the quality of herbal medicines could be achieved more in future by implementation of good agricultural practices (GAPs) at the point of cultivation of medicinal plants good manufacturing practices (GMPs) during the process of manufacture and packaging of finished herbal products, and strict measures for quality control.

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Biography

A K Saxena is currently working as a Professor and Head, Department of Pharmacology in King George's Medical University (erstwhile KGMC), Lucknow, India. He has completed his MBBS in 1977 and MD in 1985.

Subsequently, he worked as a SRF for a short time before joining as a Lecturer in 1986. During his 40 years of career, he has been actively involved in teaching of MBBS, BDS, MD and MDS students. He has played pivotal role in Curriculum Planning and its implementation for teaching the subject – Pharmacology..