

Herbal medicines

3rd edition

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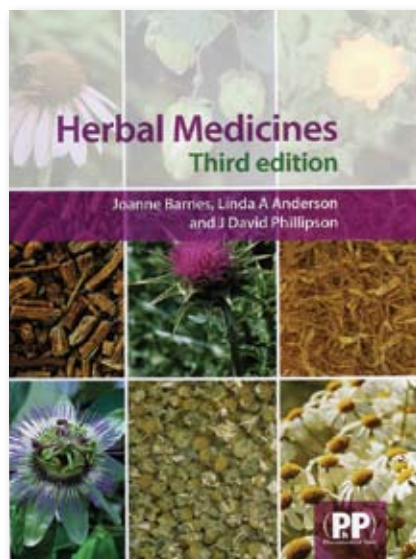
PUBLISHER Pharmaceutical Press, 1 Lambeth High St, London SE1 7JN, United Kingdom

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PUBLISHED 2007/710 pp/\$184.50



OVERALL RATING Fair

STRENGTHS Comprehensive review of current literature on academic herbal medicine

WEAKNESSES Limited clinical usefulness, owing to the lack of cross-referencing by condition; excessive caution regarding clinical recommendations; primarily a British and European focus

AUDIENCE Pharmacists and academic health care professionals interested in a comprehensive analysis of the pharmacognosy of the 152 common plant remedies covered in this volume

This is a comprehensive and respected British academic textbook of herbal medicines. Although its primary target audience is academic British pharmacists, any health care practitioner with an interest in the biochemical analysis of herbal medicines and a brief summary of their positive and negative clinical effects will find this publication suitable.

For clinicians, this volume is not particularly useful. It contains no cross-referencing by clinical

condition. Throughout the book, the tone of the text is cautious and the clinical recommendations frequently ambivalent, even when the evidence cited appears to be sound. The authors focus on an exhaustive—at times even exhausting—breakdown of the often intricate biochemical composition of the plants covered in its monographs. Such a reductionist approach offers, for the most part, little clinical clarity.

For a pharmacist or a clinician with an academic bent, especially if from Britain, this volume will afford interesting reading. For a Canadian family doctor, other publications are far more practical and useful, such as Melvyn Werbach's *Botanical Influences on Illness* or the more comprehensive handbook *The Natural Pharmacy*, edited by Schuyler Lininger; both are oriented toward a physician's day-to-day practice.

—Warren Bell MD

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