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## HERBAL MEDICINE

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## INTRODUCTION

In India, more than 70% of total population use herbal drugs for the treatment of diseases. Herbal Medicines use different alkaloids of medicinal plants for prevention of Health Issues. Due to its easy availability Herbal Medicine is cheap. Clinical medicines however use many plant-derived metabolites like opium, quinine, digitalis etc. in pharmaceutical drugs. The importance of using herbal medicine is more extended as it consists of many more unexplored herbs, minerals, fungal and algal products<sup>[1]</sup>.

## HISTORY OF AYURVEDIC HERBAL MEDICINE

Ayurveda evolved from the traditional wisdom of healers, prophets & Rishis that lived deep in the Himalayas. Different anthropology evidences indicate use of medicinal plants approximately five thousand years ago. Ayurvedic Herbal medicine has been refined by thousands of years of utilisation and experience. In about 800 BC the primary medical healing school was founded in India. A well-known scholar, healer and herbalist Charaka in his writings described 1,500 medicative plants in his book the 'Charaka Samhita'<sup>[2]</sup>. The earliest known Greek herbal medicines were those of Diocles of Carystus, written during 3rd century BC and one more by Krateuas in 1st century BC<sup>[3]</sup>. Seeds were likely to be used as herbal medicines; have been found in anthropology sites of Bronze Age China of Shang Dynasty<sup>[4,5]</sup>. More than hundreds of 224 drugs mentioned in Huangdi Neijing, an early Chinese medical book, were herbs. Ayurveda is traditional medicine system of Hindu Vedic tradition. The samhita of the Atharvaveda itself contains 114 hymns about magical cure of diseases. Origin of Ayurveda has been traced back to 5,000 BC, originating as an oral tradition and later as medical texts<sup>[6]</sup>.

## CURRENT SCENARIO OF HERBAL MEDICINES

The future medicative system exclusively depends on alternative medicine, specifically herbal medicines as it is less toxic and has few facet effects. Medicinal plants that are used massively are- *Hemidesmus indicus*, *Zingiber officinale*, *Rauvolfia serpentina*, *Cassia angustifolia*, *Acorus calamus*, *Adhatoda vasica*, *Aconitum species*, *Picrorhiza kurroa* etc. In ancient systems of medicine, the drugs are primarily distributed as water or ethanolic extract. Therefore, medicinal plant parts should be authentic and free from harmful materials like pesticides, radioactive metals and microbial contamination. The necessary step is stabilization of the bioactive extract with a minimum shelf-life for over a year. The stabilized bioactive extract ought to endure regulatory or restricted safety studies in animals<sup>[7-10]</sup>.

## IMPORTANCE OF HERBS AND METALS

India's traditional medicinal system is associated with the natural derived preparations for the treatment of various diseases. It explores the utilization of herbs, metals and minerals for medicinal purposes<sup>[11]</sup>. Herbal medications are widely believed to

be beneficial. The popularity and availability of the traditional remedies have generated concerns regarding the safety, efficacy and responsibility of practitioners using traditional remedies. Recent literatures show that ayurvedic processing of metallic formulations may bring down its shape to nanometer size <sup>[12,13]</sup>. Herbal products can be purchased without a prescription and might not recognize any potential hazards in an inferior product. In varied industrial processes significant metals are also used. The herbs are combined with metals that facilitate in assimilation and delivery of the ingredients into the human body <sup>[14,15]</sup>.

Despite the poor risk-benefit analysis for herbs, it may be reasonable to use certain herbs for patients who have conditions where there are no known effective treatments, or when standard therapies have not been tolerated or have failed to lead to improvements <sup>[16-20]</sup>.

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