

Editorial Comments

Harnessing natural resources for the benefit of mankind

We marvel at the beauty of nature, its vastness, splendor and richness but we often overlook the untapped resources that are of immense benefits to mankind. We have countless numbers of plants that have medicinal value and we are yet to harness these gifts of nature for managing human health conditions. In this issue of the journal, two articles are featured on the therapeutic potentials of aqueous extracts of plants and the possible mechanisms of action. In the paper by Salahdeen et al, aqueous extract of the leaf of *Tridax procumbens* was shown to cause vasodilatation by blocking calcium channels with stimulation of prostacyclin production and opening of potassium channels. The investigators used the rat superior mesenteric arteries. The extract does have a place in the management of elevated blood pressure.

In the second paper, Abiodun and co-workers investigated the antimicrobial activity of the stem bark of *Terminalia catapa* Linn. (Combretacea) and the leaf of *Vitex doniana* Sweet (Verbenaccae). The researchers showed that the crude ethanol extracts had very high antimicrobial and antifungal effects. The potential use of such an agent in the management of drug-resistant infections (*Staphylococcus aureus* and *B. subtili*) is thus highlighted.

This is the era of Ethnopharmacy and low resource countries must tap into the gifts of nature by studying the therapeutic potentials of various plants. The Centre for Drug Discovery, Development and Production, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Ibadan, Nigerian Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Drug Development (NIPRID), Nigerian Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) and National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) must work hand in hand to bring these potential therapeutic agents from the bench to patient care through the appropriate steps and testing. The West African Health Organization is taking a lead with regards to curriculum development and training in Traditional Medicine. All hands must be on deck for the identification of medicinally useful plants with characterization of the active ingredients and determination of optimal dosing for the desired therapeutic benefits. These have been areas of controversy in years past which must be set aside. Alternative and complementary medicine is incorporated in the new Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery Curriculum in the national undergraduate curriculum to bridge the gap in training and to ensure that medical graduates learn about the place of traditional or herbal medicine in the management of diverse conditions. We must learn from the experiences in India and China where herbal medicine is integrated with orthodox care. Artemisin for the treatment of malaria is a good example of the type of benefit from herbal medicine. It is right for us to take this step in the right direction.

A. Ogunniyi

Editor-in-Chief