

HIV Nutrition Update

Issue Highlights

- **Contamination Of Herbal Supplements**
- **Herbs In Chinese Medicine**
- **God's Love We Deliver — New York, NY**

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A PILOT INVESTIGATION OF THE MICROBIAL CONTAMINATION OF HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS: IS THERE A RISK FOR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED POPULATIONS?

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responsibility of the authors. For comments or questions, please contact: Ms. Nahikian-Nelms via email <mnelms@semo.edu> or telephone 573/651-2994.

Individuals with serious illnesses often seek complementary alternative treatment outside of the conventional realm of medical care. For persons living with HIV/AIDS, complementary alternative medicine, including herbal remedies, have become increasing sources of care. In one recent study, it was reported that 22% of patients attending an HIV clinic used medicinal herbs as a form of treatment. ⁽¹⁾

Inside this issue:

Feature	1
Editor's Note	1
Herbs in TCM	10
Program Spotlight	11
Med Watch	16
Update Central	17
Nutrition Forum	18
Resource Corner	19

Editor's Note

As noted in earlier issues, many HIV-positive people use complementary treatments including herbs. Research documenting the safety of herbs and specific interactions between herbs and antivirals is sorely lacking. This issue helps to further our education on safety issues and the use of herbs as a part of Traditional Chinese

Medicine. People living with HIV need to consider possible interactions among herbs, medications and nutrients along with the action of P450 liver enzymes, which we have focused on in earlier issues. It is vitally important for patients to discuss all treatments with their physicians and health care providers.

Editor's Corner

HIV Nutrition Update is a bimonthly newsletter of practical and timely nutrition resources. Features present peer-reviewed articles and practice-oriented reviews of essential information for the clinician working in HIV/AIDS care. Information is supplemented by news releases, conference proceedings, and expert recommendations.

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TABLE 3. SUGGESTIONS TO HELP IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS

Always inform your health care provider about all supplements that you are taking. It is important to prevent any potential interaction between prescribed medications and supplements.

Check the label for the list of ingredients. Note the expiration date on the label so that it will not expire during the time you are taking the supplement.

Choose a supplement that has met the standards of USP and/or ConsumerLab standards. This will be noted on the label.

If it is possible to use herbal supplements that have been safely boiled, brewed into a liquid or tea and stored, the potential for microbial contamination may be decreased.

Purchasing herbal supplements from bulk sources may increase the potential for secondary microbial contamination. Choosing supplements that are packaged commercially may decrease the risk.

If you need additional information about a particular product, contact the manufacturer. The name and address of the manufacturer must be included on the product label.

The FDA provides information about health claims that can be made regarding dietary supplements <<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flg-6c.html>>.

If you feel that you have suffered a harmful effect from a particular supplement, be sure to alert the FDA. File complaints at the MedWatch web site <<http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/>> or telephone 888-463-6332.