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Quality standards in medicinal plants

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ABSTRACT : Interest in traditional systems of medicines has increased substantially in both developing and developed countries. A major lacuna in traditional medicine is the lack of drug standardization information and quality control. Most of the ayurvedic medicines are in the form of crude extracts which are mixture of several ingredients and the active principles when analyzed failed to provide the desired effect. So quality standards is utmost important in medicinal plants. It is, therefore, essential to establish internationally recognized guidelines for assessing their quality. In spite of having in depth traditional knowledge, plant biodiversity, suitable agro ecological situations and vast scientific man power, India has not achieved the level of growth what China has achieved, in the global drug market. China has pharmacologically validated and improved many additional herbal medicines and eventually integrated them in formal health care system. Considering these facts, it is high time that we should give enough attention for maintaining the quality standards in the whole process beginning from the selection of propagation material to the final product reaching the consumer, by choosing the right plant with correct botanical identity, growing in original ecological situation, meeting the requirements of good collection practices, good agricultural practices, good laboratory practices and good manufacturing practices, harvesting at the right time, drying and storage at controlled conditions, absence of pesticide, aflatoxin, and heavy metal contamination, absence of bacteria and fungal contamination, the required per cent of active ingredients, packing, labelling and proper documentation. If all the above mentioned procedures are strictly adhered, India can no doubt become an important player in the international drug market in the immediate future.

KEY WORDS : Medicinal plants, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha

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