The herbal approach

In an era that prides itself on its science basis, herbs may seem to represent a throwback to the dark ages – images of monks stirring cauldrons or old women plucking grasses from the hedgerow. However, there are very good reasons for taking that prejudice by the scruff of its neck and kicking it out of the house. Herbs are coming back with a vengeance and there are very good reasons why this is so.

The use of herbal remedies may predate the beginnings of humankind: many animals make use of the medicinal properties of herbs. Ethologists know that monkeys are perfectly happy to eat plants for the purposes both of getting a drug high and recuperating from an illness. Some monkeys know which plants will help them get rid of parasites, others know which ones have a contraceptive effect. This knowledge of herbal medicines by animals, known as zoopharmacognosy, is not restricted to monkeys. One animal researcher once had to pursue a berserk pregnant elephant for 20 miles until she came to a tree and tore it to shreds as she ate the bark. Shortly afterwards she gave birth to her calf. On analysis, the medical qualities of the tree bark was found to contain a chemical that was helpful in aiding delivery.

The use of plant medicines by animals poses a problem for those who believe that knowledge advances only through scientific research. Have the monkeys been scientific? What then of the elephant? Surely this was no accident. The elephant knew what it was looking for. It has, in fact, been suggested that all animals, including the human animal, have an instinct for recognising what is good and what is not good to eat - and for knowing what plants may be good for what ailments. –But if we do have such instincts – more refined or accessible in some individuals than others – then the implications are enormous.

The medicinal properties of plants have been known to humankind too, for centuries. Hippocrates used to prescribe willow bark for a number of ailments – later the active ingredient was isolated and marketed under the name of aspirin. With the rise of science, single substance drugs became the order of the day and herbalism to a large extent went underground. It became a woman's area of expertise, with recipes being handed on from mother to daughter.

In eighteenth century North America, a woman by the name of Mary Johnson came to the attention of the medical authorities. She was working as a healer and was claiming success in the treatment of cancer. The House of Burgesses of the General Assembly of Virginia appointed a committee to look into the case. Mary Johnson's medicine was a mixture of garden sorrel, celandine, persimmon bark and spring water. The committee took evidence over a period of six or seven years, 1748-54. They listened to the testimony of many witnesses who had taken the remedy and who had been cured. The result? Mrs Johnson was awarded £100 pounds to aid her work.

Chemicals and herbs – a fundamental difference

Mrs Johnson's story is a rare tale of diligent and generous assessment. The outcome of the investigation would be very different today – for the simple fact is, herbs represent a fundamental challenge to the ruling medical paradigm. This paradigm argues as follows: If there is anecdotal evidence that a herb has a specific medicinal property then it is possible that the plant in question contains a specific chemical which can be called the active ingredient. The plant is then studied to determine what its chemical contents are and these are tested one at a time until the active ingredient

is identified. Then this isolated substance can be tested scientifically to assess its range of action and ideal dosage. It will also, incidentally, be possible then to manufacture the chemical directly in large quantities without having to go through the arduous and expensive process of extraction from plant sources.

This illustrates the fact that the ultimate aim of chemical research is to create on an industrial scale single chemicals in pure form. By contrast, Mary Johnson proceeded by mixing a number of herbs together ─ in what proportions is not known. She was operating according to very different principles. While the scientist is looking for pure unadulterated chemicals, the herbalist is seeking to blend combinations of many different chemicals. There is good evidence to suggest that Mrs Johnson's approach is the way forward. We can see this easily with two simple and common examples. Smokers take into their bodies a great deal of nicotine every time they light up a cigarette. Yet, if they were to place one drop of pure unadulterated nicotine on their hand, by mistake perhaps in a chemical laboratory, they would have only four seconds to live. Pure nicotine is one of the most potent poisons known to man.

Marijuana, to take another example, has clearly demonstrated medicinal qualities. It is known to help relieve eye-pressure in the case of glaucoma and to reduce the effects of nausea ─ making it a very suitable herbal supplement for people undergoing chemotherapy. Unfortunately, its status as an illegal drug makes it difficult for a herbalist to prescribe. Scientists therefore proceeded to isolate from the marijuana plant an active ingredient, which they called THC. This was approved as a drug in 1985. The result? Science News reported 'many patients and physicians claim that purified THC is not nearly as effective as a puff of pot' and commenting on its side-effects, one writer noted that '50 percent of the patients said they'd rather throw up' than take THC.

There is no evidence that single substance chemicals are superior to herbs. In fact, there is good reason to believe they may be inferior. Why? For three reasons.

First, there is the problem of resistance. Invading organisms such as bacteria and viruses are able to resist pure chemical forms quite effectively. That is why bacteria are increasingly becoming resistent to antibiotics and it's also why the body is able to resist chemotherapeutic drugs ─ and if we remember, doctors are now *mixing* these chemotherapeutic agents. That is, they are starting to mimic the herbalist.

Secondly, the negative side-effects of purified molecular forms ─ which are the basis of all drugs ─ are rarely present when herbs are used. This is not to say that herbs are always safe. They aren't. But such side effects as there are tend to be muffled by the presence of the surrounding chemicals in the composite herbal structures found in nature.

The third, and perhaps the most important, reason is the fact that the concept of the single active ingredient is almost certainly wrong. It is much more likely, in any herbal substance, that one dominant active chemical, is boosted by the presence of others. When separated from these surrounding molecules it may no longer have the expected effect. The process by which two chemicals contribute to a more pronounced effect is known as synergy. We can even imagine a situation where none of the ingredients of a particular plant have any effect on their own ─ but when present in an organic whole combine to have an effect.

This point about 'organic wholes' is central to the herbalist's credo. In the herb, compounds are interconnected in a coherent structure and have certain qualities both separately and together that are entirely absent from all artificially created chemicals. As we have seen, organic germanium is health

giving, while chemically identical inorganic germanium causes kidney damage. If we follow this argument then we needn't be too despondent at the banning of laetrile and germanium — after all they are present in abundant quantities in dietary form — and this dietary form is likely to be more effective.

Some people demonstrate the difference between organic and inorganic forms by using the metaphor of music. If you press the A key on a piano, you create three kinds of vibrations. One is the vibration that creates the note A but mixed with this are overtones that make it clear to any listener that the note A comes from a piano and not a violin or clarinet. In addition there are other vibrations that stem from the interaction of the particular musician and the particular instrument. The writer Dean Black in describing this fact makes the point that if the music were a herb, then the active element would be the A note — it is the most noticeable property of the sound and it's the only one that can stand alone: '[However] none of the three vibrations define the note's entire function, and some of the note's most interesting properties — its 'piano-ness' and its 'tone quality' — don't exist anywhere except as they somehow emerge like magic when the vibrations blend together.' (Black, 1988) Herbalists believe that the chemical properties of a whole plant operate in the same way and that we lose these properties when we break the plant up.

Not everyone is convinced by this argument. They say that drugs are better than herbs because herbs contain too many ingredients in variable concentrations. One ounce of ma-huang grown in America may be very different in quality from an ounce of the same herb grown in China. There is no standardisation, so it is impossible to adequately test the precise effects any herb might have. Because these objections don't apply to drugs, they say, drugs must be better. But no logic forces us to accept that just because a drug is easier to experiment with in a laboratory that it is therefore a better form of medicine.

The conflict of herb versus drug is, in miniature, the war between factory and nature, between West and East, between 'scientific' techno-medicine and holistic healing. How is it that there is no official recognition that herbs play a part in the treatment of cancer? Because it is impossible to prove this effect under the conditions of proof currently laid down — and it would cost US$200-300 million to attempt to do so. No herbal or pharmaceutical company would consider spending that kind of money on an unpatentable medicine. After all, to recoup the outlay it would have to charge more for its product than its rivals — not the best conditions for commercial success. And that is another reason for the conflict between drugs and herbs. There are high profit margins on patentable drugs — not so on unpatentable herbs.

Warnings

Once we accept that herbs are a soundly based approach to medical treatment we need to know which herbs are recommended for the prevention or cure of cancer. Before that a warning is in order. Herbs cannot be presumed to be safe just because they are herbs. Some herbs are poisonous. Pregnant women, in particular, should not take a herb without consulting a professional. Anyone taking a herb should preferably consult a practitioner but at least read up on it first.

Many herbal preparations can be effective means of keeping a cancer in remission — but almost all herbalists say that although the herbs may stop a tumour growing or even shrink it so that it is clinically invisible, they cannot kill the tumour. Once the herbs are no longer taken the cancer returns. Diet, they say, is the only way to correct whatever the underlying cause was. On the plus side, on the other hand, because of the biochemical complexity of herbs, cancers will not become

resistant to them as they do to purified chemicals.

Astragalus

Astragalus is a Chinese herb used mainly for patients with heart disease or high blood pressure. It has recently been shown to have a very strong normalising effect on people with damaged immune systems. It is therefore not only recommended as a cancer prevention/cure but also as a herbal support for people undergoing chemotherapy and radiation.

Dose: 1-3 400 mg capsules per day.

Chaparral

Chaparral is a desert plant covering large areas of southern California and Arizona. It has small brittle leaves and these have been used by the local Indian people to make a health tonic tea. It has a pungent smell and very bitter taste. One dramatic case of a cancer cure using chaparral alone occured in 1967-8. The patient was a man by the name of Ernest Farr, an 87-year-old man who had had four operations on a malignant melanoma and had been told there was no point in having further surgery. He drank chaparral tea over a period of four months . The cancer shrank almost entirely away and was still very small nine months later. Clearly something in the chaparral had worked. Scientists investigated and found the chemical substance NDGA. This was already a well-known chemical as it was used to preserve butter in the tropics. It is a very powerful anti-oxidant. It is not known whether it works for all cancers ─ one test found little activity against breast cancer while another found it to be effective against gastrointestinal cancer.

However, there is a caution. One woman taking chaparral in large quantities suffered severe liver damage. A study has also shown that chaparral taken in very small doses may be counter-effective and result in stimulating the tumour. The same result has, interestingly, also been shown in one Italian study for vitamin C. A little may be a bad thing.

Ernest Farr took 7-8 grams of fresh chaparral leaves and steeped them in a quart of hot water. He drank 2-3 cups a day. Farr lived to the age of 96 when he died of the same melanoma. It appears that his doctor had refused to allow him to continue taking chaparral tea. As with other herbal cancer cures, chaparral needs to be continued after the tumour appears to have disappeared.

Long term chaparral users need to take iron supplements.

Chinese herbs

The Chinese view tumours as the ‘uppermost branch’ of the disease not its root. They consider cancer to be caused by a wide range of external or internal excesses, e.g. an excessive dose of a cancer causing chemical or an excessive dose of bad emotions.. All forms of excess result in the ‘qi’, the body’s living energy, becoming blocked in some way.

Some Chinese doctors prefer to treat cancer with herbs alone, while others try to mix Chinese herbs with western chemotherapy and radiation. Fu-zhen therapy, an immune enhancing herbal regimen, has had very good results when compared with just chemotherapy and radiation. In one study of 76 patients with stage II liver cancer, 46 were treated with Fu-zhen herbs in combination with chemotherapy and radiation. 29 survived one year and ten survived for three years. Only six of the thirty given chemotherapy and radiation survived one year. In fact, success has come from using the

herbs alone.

The most commonly used Fu-zhen herbs are astragalus, ligustrum, ginseng, codonopsis, atractylodes, ganoderma, actinidia and rabdosia. Actinidia is a root that contains the polysaccharide ACPS-R. In one study, when injected into mice, 90 percent of tumours stopped growing. Another study showed a 50 percent success rate with liver cancers.

Doctors at the Beijing Institute for Cancer Research have found that a herbal tonic usually prescribed for kidney ailments, known variously as Golden Book Tea or Six Flavor Tea had a highly significant effect when combined with chemotherapy against small cell lung cancer. It appears that all traditional kidney tonics may have these beneficial effects.

Tang kuei (Angelica sinensis) is a highly reputed blood tonic and has had successful results in treating cancer either alone or in combination with other herbs. Women have used it as a douche against cervical cancer.

Another herb mentioned in western books is 'juzentaihoto' sometimes known as JT-48 or JTT. It is a blood strengthening herb and is reportedly very effective in helping chemotherapy patients recover.There are certainly other beneficial Chinese herbs. Note that the attitude of Chinese herbalists to herbs is completely different from the way western doctors view drugs. For a western doctor the best kind of drug is one that has a specific effect against a specific ailment. The more generalised a drug's effects, the less it is valued. In fact any drug that claims to be a cure all will be automatically disregarded as being valueless. In Chinese herbalism the reverse is true. For them, the most inferior herb is the one that acts against a single specific problem. The most valued is the one that has a broad spectrum of effects. Since herbalists seek first and foremost to promote total health and so aid the healing of individual this makes sense.

Most Chinese herb books do not, in fact, list cancer as a disease that herbs can fight. Instead they list the herbs that are effective in strengthening the immune system. More specific agents may be listed as anti-viral agents.

Studies have shown a very strong supportive effect of Chinese herbs and herbal tonics for patience undergoing surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. Patients taking Chinese herbs appear to live longer and suffer less severe side-effects. Most of these herbal formulae contain herbs that

- Supplement qi energy
- Clear the heat
- Regulate the blood
- Supplement the blood
- Supplement yin and yang (Boik 1995).

Some critics of Chinese grown herbs point out that China's herbal doctors depend on large quantities of the basic herbs. These cannot be obtained from the wild in the necessary quantities so have to be grown commercially. The mineral content of most of China's farmlands is heavily depleted and pesticide use is standard. The result is that herbs are of low potency. Chinese herbs that are grown in Canada, USA or Australia should therefore be found.

The Clark Cure

The Clark cure, put forward by Dr Hulda Regehr Clark, a Canadian physiologist, is a new and surprising addition to the herbal armoury ─ and very radical. Indeed, if she is right, the entire cancer research industry can switch off its lights and go home. Clark's view is that cancer is caused by a parasite ─ the human intestinal fluke. This causes no major problems in the gut where it normally resides but by some means as yet unknown ─ but associated with the presence of propyl alcohol ─ it can move to other organs where it starts creating problems. The problem it creates if it gets to the liver is cancer. Her test for cancer is to test for the presence of the marker Ortho-phospho-tyrosine. Just as the cause is simple, so is the cure that she proposes: black walnut tincture, wormwood, and cloves. The first two kill adult and developmental stages of over 100 parasites. The cloves kill the eggs.

Dr Clark has published details of her cure with 100 case studies in her book: *the Cure for all Cancers*. She believes that many, if not most, ailments, from asthma and AIDS to heart disease and schizophrenia, are the result of parasitical infection and she believes that her formula will rid the body of many of these. She accepts that other formulas will also work. In her view, the parasite is only half the problem, the other half is the propyl alcohol. Most people can process this effectively and so it causes no problem whatsoever. But people developing cancer have an impaired ability to do this. For this, she blames the presence in the liver of aflatoxin B. This is a known carcinogenic substance found in mouldy food. 'All cancer patients (100%) have both propyl alcohol and the intestinal fluke in their livers. The solvent propyl alcohol is responsible for letting the fluke establish itself in the liver. In order to get cancer, you must have both the parasite and propyl alcohol in your body.' (Hulda Regehr Clark, 1993)

One way to deal with the problem, she argues, is to eliminate propyl alcohol from the system. Unfortunately it is a common antiseptic used in the food and cosmetics industries. Check the items in your bathroom and you will find most contain one of the following ingredients: propanol, isopropyl alcohol, isopropanol and so on. Even if not listed, she claims that propyl alcohol is commonly used for cleaning industrial equipment and so may be present in minute quantities in a wide range of modern retail goods ─ but for those people with an impaired ability to break it down, even these quantities are sufficient to cause cancer. She particularly fingers hair and cosmetics products, sugar, carbonated soft drinks and even bottled water, fruit drinks. and vitamin supplements. She makes an exception for vitamin C as this helps the liver to break down propyl alcohol by directly attacking the aflatoxin.

Dose:

- **Black walnut tincture** This should be taken in a glass of water four times a day. Start the first day with one drop each time and increase the dose by one drop a day until on day 20 you are taking 20 drops in water four times a day. Then reduce to 20 drops once a day for 3 months ─ and then reduced to 30 drops once a day, two days a week. It should be taken on an empty stomach, i.e. half an hour before a meal.
- **Wormwood** This herb is made from the leaves of the Artemesia shrub. It is also available from herbalists as part of a combination of herbs. It should be taken once a day before the evening meal increasing daily from one capsule to fourteen. Then maintaining this level twice a week forever.
- **Cloves** Obtain whole cloves and grind them up. Cloves that have already been ground do not

work. Fill capsules (preferably, size 00 but any vitamin capsules will do) with the ground cloves and take three times a day before meals building up from one capsule a time to three capsules a time. Continue until day 10 and then reduce to 3 capsules once a day for three months ─ and then just twice a week forever.

Dr Clark's four point plan for regaining health is simple but extreme: remove every unnatural chemical substance from your mouth, from your diet, from your body and from your home. This part of her recommendations is extreme. But since the herbal part of her cure is cheap and not harmful we can happily do this no matter what else we wish to do.

Co-enzyme Q10 (CoQ)

The quinone family of chemical compounds is a very important one for cancer. One of the major chemotherapeutic drugs, adriamycin, is a quinone. Other quinones are being tested in trials for effects against Alzheimer's and other ailments. Adriamycin is an oxidative quinone whose effects are very different from others, like CoQ which are anti-oxidative. Adriamycin is therefore dangerous for people with weak hearts. CoQ protects against this effect. It is therefore recommended that anyone undergoing chemotherapy with adriamycin should take large amounts of CoQ.

Co-enzyme Q10 is a quinone which is found almost everywhere in nature ─ which is why it is called the ubiquitous quinone ─ ubiquinone for short. But it is present in extremely small quantities ─ too small to be medically useful. While many quinones have an improved immuno-strengthening effect at very small doses, ubiquinone is not one of these. CoQ has an increased effect with larger doses. However, it is known that people with cancer have reduced levels of CoQ suggesting that it is used up in fighting the tumour.

A Danish study, published in 1994, found that women with terminal breast cancer did very well when taking 390 mg a day. This amount seemed to be sufficient to prevent further tumour growth and even to cause tumour shrinkage. A group of 32 women with advanced stage breast cancer were given, in addition to the normal treatments of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, a programme of supplements including 390 mg of CoQ. Danish cancer specialist, Knud Lockwood said: 'I have never before seen spontaneous regression of the type of breast tumours that we were treating in this trial, or comparable regression on any conventional anti-cancer therapy.'.

There are no known toxic effects. Many people take 60-90 mg a day as a general energising tonic.

Essiac

Essiac is another Canadian herbal treatment for cancer, and one that similarly has caused controversy. The official story of Essiac starts in 1922, when a young nurse by the name of Rene Caisse was given the names of a number of herbs by an old woman who had cured herself of breast cancer by drinking a tea containing these herbs. This old woman had got the remedy from a native Ojibwa Indian. Some time later, her aunt was diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer and given six months to live. Caisse remembered the herbs and, with the doctor's consent, gave them to her aunt ─ who went on to live another 21 years. She was given more cases and these also healed. Caisse not only gave the Essiac combination (named by reversing her own name) in the form of tea but also ─ in a modified form ─ by injection in the site of the cancer. She found this to be quicker and more effective.

Doctors were so impressed they petitioned the Canadian government in 1926 to give Rene Caisse

facilities for research. The result? They tried to arrest her for treating cancer without a medical licence. Fortunately for her she had the support of nine very eminent doctors so they desisted. Gradually, however, official disapproval tightened the noose and doctors, fearing for their own careers, started to distance themselves from her. In 1938 a Commission of Enquiry conducted an investigation. Unlike Mary Johnson, Rene Caisse did not receive a generous appraisal. It concluded that all of the patients who came to testify on her behalf, none had ever had cancer ─ despite their X-rays and medical documentation.

Despite harassment, Caisse continued to give patients her herbal treatment ─ without making any charge. In one case she records that her treatment for cancer had the interesting side-effect of also curing the patient's diabetes. If, as Dr Clark believes, diabetes is also caused by a parasitical fluke, then Essiac may work by eliminating the parasites.

There are currently a number of variations on the market ─ Essiac, Tea of Life and Flor-Essence and possibly others ─ but they all share the same official ingredients: burdock root, turkish rhubarb, slippery elm and sheep sorrel. Additional ingredients found in commercial Essiac teas are: Red Clover blossom, kelp, blessed thistle herb and watercress herb. The tea can be drunk both as a treatment for cancer or as a preventative health tonic.

Rene Caisse died in 1978 at the age of 91. In 1983, Bruce Hendrick, Chief of the Division of Neurosurgery at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto wrote to the Canadian Minister for Health and Welfare asking her to authorize clinical trials on the effectiveness of Essiac tea. In his letter he said: 'I am most impressed with the effectiveness of the treatment and its lack of side effects.' Further support for its effectiveness comes from Dr Charles Brusch, personal physician to President John F Kennedy, who also claims to have been cured of his cancer using Essiac.

The Canadian Cancer Society nevertheless considers Essiac to be a questionable or unproven method of cancer treatment. Canadian health laws prohibit it from being marketed as an anti-cancer treatment but they accept that it is not harmful and it is available on prescription ─ but the prescribing doctor must first get authorization from the Deputy Director of the Health Protection branch. They warn that Essiac may cause some nausea or diarrhoea. They also warn that it is not established that the commercial brands named above are in fact made with the true essic recipe. Nevertheless, the manufacturers of Flor*Essence and Tea of Life are able to produce testimonial letters from people who claim to have been cured by the herbal tea. One of the main constituents ─ Burdock root ─ has demonstrated anti-tumour activity on its own but, as with all herbal formulas, it is the synergistic effects that are important and which remain largely unexplored.

Essiac may be obtained from Shawnee Moon Herbaceuticals, 8219 Jefferson Avenue, St Louis, MO 63114. USA. Phone: 1- 314- 427- 3109

European herbs

The following herbs are proposed by Maria Treben, an Austrian herbalist, and Dr Vogel, an internationally renowned Swiss herbalist, as being good for cancer. None of these herbs have negative side effects and can be taken in large quantities.

- **Horsetail tea** (*Equisetum arvense*) This is one of the most ancient of cancer cures. The horsetail can also be used in the form of a poultice. Horsetail is rich in silica.

- **Calendula** (aka Marigold) A fresh juice of all the plant ─ leaves, stem and flower ─ should be drunk regularly.
- **Yarrow** (aka Milfoil ─ *Achillea millefolium*) This is especially recommended for women.
- **Stinging nettles** The whole plant is used. It has a great reputation for blood cleansing. Pick them in May and store for the winter.
- **Butterbur** (*Petasites officinalis (hybridus)*) This is highly recommended both as a cancer treatment and as a pain reliever. This is the basis of Vogel's herbal product, petaforce

Maria Treben recommends for a general cancer treatment a tea made with 2 litres of water 300 gm of calendula, 100 gm yarrow, 100 gm stinging nettles.

For leukaemia she recommends a tea consisting of

15g (½oz) St John's Wort, dandelion roots

20g (¾oz) speedwell, wormwood

25g (1oz) bedstraw, yarrow, goat's beard

30g (1¼oz) elder shoots, calendula, greater celandine, stinging nettle,

Mix all the ingredients together. Put one heaped teaspoon a cup and pour boiling water over it. Leave it for half a minute to two minutes (longer with dried herbs, shorter time with fresh herbs). Make 1 to 2 litres for a day. Keep in a thermos and sip. (One cup is 250 ml or a quarter litre).

Hoxsey's Herbs

In 1840, one John Hoxsey had a horse with a cancerous growth. Thinking there was nothing he could do he turned the horse loose on a pasture. Amazingly, the cancerous growth soon began to shrink and eventually it fell off. Hoxsey observed the horse and saw that it liked to go to a certain part of the pasture and graze on the plants in that place. If we accept that all animals have an instinct for healing plants then there is nothing strange about this story. Hoxsey collected the plants in that area and experimented with them in various combinations. Eventually, he made a formula that was handed down from father to son until it reached Harry Hoxsey in 1919.

Harry Hoxsey began opening cancer clinics around the USA. He had seventeen when the cancer establishment started to crack down. Morris Fishbein of the American Medical Association offered to take over the treatment. His deal was that Hoxsey would receive nothing for the first 9 years and after that, he would receive 10% of the profits. Not surprisingly Hoxsey said no. Fishbein then arranged through his powerful political connections to have Hoxsey arrested 125 times in 16 months. The charges all dealt with practising medicine without a licence. The cases were all thrown out of court. But eventually, Hoxsey was forced to close down. In 1963, his chief nurse opened the Bio-medical Centre in Tijuana, Mexico and Hoxsey's herbal treatment is still available there.

Hoxey's herbs include the following: red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), burdock root (*Arctium lappa*), barberry bark (*Berberis vulgaris*), licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), buckthorn bark (*Rhammus purshiana*), prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum americana*), stillingia (*Stillingia sylvatica*), cascara amarga (*Picramnia antiderma*) with potassium iodide. Chaparral (*Larrea tridentata*) is a late addition to the formula.)

Patricia Spain, who did a study of the herbs for the US Congress Office of Technology as part of its

assessment of alternative cancer therapies, wrote in her report: 'More recent literature leaves no doubt that Hoxsey's formula...does indeed contain many plant substances of marked therapeutic activity.'

Pau d'arco and cat's claw

In 1967, the Brazilian newspaper O'Cruzeiro reported the story of a cancer-stricken girl from Rio who continually prayed for a cure. In a dream or vision, she saw a monk who told her that she would recover if she made a tea brewed with the bark of the Pau d'arco tree. The monk returned in a second vision and told her which specific pau d'arco trees she was to use. Whether these visions were true — perhaps a response to a subconscious recognition of the medicinal powers of this tree — or whether they were simply a necessary guise in which to cloak a desire persuasively, the girl was given the tea she required and she recovered.. She was not alone. Many others have claimed their cancers have gone into long term remission after drinking Pau d'arco tea.

Anecdotal evidence and folk practice throughout South America appears to justify the claims made for this tree bark.. Besides cancer, it is supposedly effective against diabetes, ulcers and rheumatism to name a few — and applied to the skin is good for burns. The bark of the tree contains many chemicals that are known to have anti-tumour effects: tannins, quinones and triterpines and others. There are many different varieties of the pau d'arco tree — and each variety seems to have its own range of medicinal characteristics. Its anti-cancer effects have been demonstrated in a number of animal studies.

Pau d'arco — also known as lapacho and taheebo — is available as a bark, in powdered form, and as an alcoholic extract. Unfortunately, most studies on the alcoholic extracts commercially available in Europe and N. America consider them to be medically useless as they do not appear to contain the active ingredient, lapachol. Others argue that looking for a single active ingredient is wrong: pau d'arco contains at least 12 quinones of which lapachol is only one. Pau d'arco pills are also considered not useful. The tea barks themselves vary in quality, some having no measurable lapachol. However, lapachol is an effective immunostimulator at extremely low quantities so the barks may be effective even though the presence of lapachol is not evident.

Dose: To make pau d'arco tea add six tablespoons of the bark to four cups of boiling water. The water is kept boiling until it reduces to three cups. This takes about five minutes. The tea is then cooled and then filtered. Three to eight cups a day should be taken, each cup sipped slowly but steadily. The tea not being drunk should be kept refrigerated . Toxicity is low. The symptom to expect from over consumption is a slight skin rash.

Another South American herb believed to have powerful anti-cancer properties is cat's claw. Again there appears to be very little toxicity. High doses are recommended for cancer patients.

Reishi Mushrooms

The Japanese call it 'reishi', the Chinese call it 'ling zhi' . It was highly revered by Taoists in search of the elixir of immortality. Of course, any herb associated with long life is very likely to have shown clear evidence of general medicinal value. There are a number of varieties, the most potent of which is considered by the Chinese to be the red fungus — but this may simply be because the colour red has very positive symbolism in Chinese culture. Reishi mushrooms are very high in polysaccharides and these may be responsible for its immune system stimulation effect. The Chinese

view reishi as a tonic that boosts the vital life energy they call ‘qi’ (pronounced: chi).

Studies have shown that reishi mushroom extracts can kill stapphylococci and streptococci bacteria. This makes it a very useful treatment for pneumonia and hospital acquired infections. Interestingly, low doses of the mushroom appear to be more effective than large doses. The optimal dose appears to be 4 grams a day. One Japanese cancer surgeon, Dr. Fukumi Morishige , stumbled on this by chance when a woman who was dying of cancer suddenly appeared to be cured. He discovered that her husband had been giving her fresh reishi mushroom tea everyday. Morishige now prescribes a daily intake of 4 grams of reishi tea with 10 grams of a special form of vitamin C known as nucleic acid ascorbate.

Morishige discovered that large doses of vitamin C prevented the diarrhoea caused by taking in too much reishi. He therefore reasoned that the vitamin C was having the effect of increasing its absorbablity. In this way he was able to increase the dose of reishi to 9 grams a day. Now, doses of 9-15 grams/day are standard in the US. Reishi can also be taken effectively by intravenous injection. Morishige has treated and cured a number of cancer patients using nothing else but this combination of vitamin C and reishi mushrooms.

Studies undertaken by the National Cancer Research Centre shows that mice injected with reishi extract showed tumour regression between 50-100% depending on the dose.

People who take reishi mushrooms show a marked increase in blood oxygenation levels, and for this reason it is also used as an antidote to altitude sickness. The importance in cancer treatment of having high tissue oxygen levels has already been mentioned and this may be one of the ways in which reishi has an anti-cancer effect. Apart from its claimed anti-cancer effects, it is recommended in Japan for patients undergoing radiation and chemotherapy as a way of reducing side-effects.

Some healers use it in combination with shiitake mushrooms and astragalus. It is used to treat asthma, allergies as well as insomnia.

It can have a few unpleasant side-effects: dizziness, light-headedness and itchiness. These can be dealt with by lowering the dose and then slowly increasing it. There have been no signs of toxicity in many studies ─ even up to levels equivalent to a human taking 350 grams a day.

Reishi is very bitter and not eaten as a food. It is cut into pieces and brewed in hot water: 5 grams/litre. The water is simmered until it is reduced to a third of a litre. It is then drunk. The vitamin C has to be taken separately as it is destroyed by heat. Reishi is also available in capsule form. At present it is quite expensive and as a result a great deal of fake ling zhi has made its way on to the market.

Triterpines

This is a family of essential oils found in many plants and seem to be the most potent ingredient in many herbs and plant extracts associated with long life. And, of course, long life can be seen simply as a life not shortened by cancer. The following are known to contain significant quantities of triterpines: Siberian Ginseng; Licorice root; gingko leaves; Gotu Kola ─ a creeping herb common in India which is associated with long life; soybeans; and Chaga ─ a Russian herb used as an anti-cancer agent. These herbs have shown significant anti-tumour activity in studies in the US and Finland. Olives contain oleanolic acid, a triterpine, which is being examined with great interest by

the Japanese as a chemopreventive of cancer.

Ayurvedic Medicine

This 6,000 year old system of treatment uses a wide range of herbal treatments ─ but because of the complexity of the system it cannot usefully be summarised here. As with Chinese herbalists, it is recognised that a single cancer may arise from different causes and therefore needs to be treated differently. As an indication of what is possible with this system, we can consider the case study presented in 1989 to the Indian Association of Cancer Chemotherapists. Dr Joshi, an allopathic doctor who also uses ayurvedic methods, reported on 422 terminal cancer patients he had treated since 1973. Of these 17% obtained complete relief of their symptoms and 'prolongation of life'. Partial relief of symptoms occurred in 292 cases 69% and there was no response in 21%. For an introduction to Ayurveda, see Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health*.

Bloodroot

Bloodroot is a herb which has, according to some observers, demonstrated very powerful anti-cancer properties. Bloodroot, Sanguinaria canadensis, is native to the woods of north-central United States and Canada. Its taproot exudes a blood-coloured juice from which its name derives. It was one of the most popular herbal remedies among Plains Indians who used it internally for sore throats and respiritory ailments and externally for growths on the surface of the body. It is this last property that makes it interesting for people with cancer ─ especially for those with melanoma or other surface tumours. Quite simply, it dissolves any form of malignant growth while leaving healthy tissue alone.

Dr Andrew Weil used some on his dog which was suffering from a large surface tumour. For three days he smeared a small coat of paste on the tumour. He stopped on the fourth day because he was alarmed to see blood. It seemed that the tumour was separating itself from the flesh around it. He disinfected the wound and kept an eye on developments. Two days later the entire tumour fell off and the raw flesh around it quickly healed up: ' The end result was a perfectly circular, slightly depressed area of skin, with no trace of tumour. The bloodroot had removed it more neatly than one could have done with a scalpel...the dog had shown no signs of discomfort.' (Weil, 1995)

Here then is a herb that directly attacks cancers. Its effects are enhanced by mixing it with zinc chloride. It forms a scab over the cancer and expels it from the body. No secondary infections follow. It is possible that the bloodroot will seek out tumours and eliminate them even though they are not on the surface.

Unfortunately, the ointment that Dr Andrew Weil used is extremely difficult to get hold of because of the oppressive vigilance of the FDA in America. The supplier is now believed to be living in Nassau in the Bahamas. It may be possible to find a herbalist to make up an ointment containing the following ingredients: water, zinc chloride, bloodroot paste, glycerin, galanga, capsicum, burdock, larrea and urea.

The manufacturer of the ointment, also markets an oral version called Cansema Tonic. This contains the following listed ingredients: distilled water, alcohol, chapparal, red clover, taheebo bark, inkberry, galangal root, bloodroot, arrowroot, zinc chloride, unrefined, unprocessed honey glycerine. One teaspoon in a cup of water taken with meals. as it may cause nausea.

The problem is, any herbalist giving the ointment might conceivably be accused of committing an offence under the law as he will be directly treating cancer itself, and not the person with cancer. So

the law is potentially depriving patients of access to a herb with, it would appear, powerful anti-cancer properties. Since malignant melanoma is on the increase and is a virulently aggressive cancer, there would appear to be good reasons to allow the use of the paste as an ointment. Yet we are not free to have access to this herb. Most herbalists want a quiet life. Few people wish to be martyrs. The result is that the very few people in the know will quietly seek out this treatment for themselves but the vast majority of cancer patients will be deprived of this source of hope. Does this make sense as public policy? Clearly not, yet it is public policy and will remain so until there is effective pressure to change that policy.

Caution

This ointment is extremely caustic. It must not be ingested, it must be kept away from children and it should not be applied close to any mucous membranes: mouth, rectum, eyes or genitalia. The ointment should be applied in very small doses as large doses can cause severe burning, nausea and sleeplessness.

Saw Palmetto

This is the herb for anyone with prostate problems. It is also supposed to have aphrodisiac qualities ─ which again is good: regular sexual activity is also supposed to be beneficial for people with prostate problems. When purchasing, make sure the strength is 85-95% fatty acids and sterols. 160 mgs twice daily. People with prostate cancer, in addition to the saw palmetto, should take zinc (50-60 mgs daily) because their prostate fluids are low in this mineral. In one study, 14 out of 19 patients treated with zinc showed tumour shrinkage. In addition, magnesium has also been shown to be beneficial for the prostate.

Other herbs

The following herbs have been shown to have a strong general anti-cancer effect ─ and also a protective effect against radiation: cumin, poppy seeds, ambrosia and f`o-ti. Of benefit to teliver are: milk thistle, artichoke, dandelion, turmeric and rosemary.

Chlorophyll has shown a marked ability to prevent or slow the development of cancerous mutations accordingtostudies at MD Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texax. Since it is abundant in green vegetables (the darker the better), there is no problem of access. Chlorophyll is chemically almost identical to haemoglobin, which may be an indication of the value of using Chinese herbal blood-strengthening tonics for cancer patients.

Sources of Herbs

To find a herbalist write to the National Institute of Medical Herbalists, 56 Longbrooke Street, Exeter, Devon EX1 6AH ─ or look up herbalists or health clinics in the yellow pages. You can also ask the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

- Neal's Yard Remedies, Neal's Yard, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9DP
- East West Herbs, also at Neal's Yard, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9DP
- G Baldwin & Co 171-173 Walworth Road, London SE17 1RW
- Herbal Apothecary, 70a The High Street, Syston, Leicestershire LE7 8GQ

- Phyto Products, 3 King's mill Way, Hermitage Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 5ER

US Sources

- Brasseur's Herbs, 608 Hudson Avenue, Newark, OH 43055, USA
- Hanna's Herb Shop, 5684 Valmont Road, Boulder, CO 80301 USA
- San Francisco Herb & Natural Food Co, 1010 48th Street, Emeryville, CA 94608 USA

Access to bloodroot

See product links in the 'links to resources' page of this website