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Herbal cardiotoxicals II

Shashi K Agarwal

Center for Contemporary and Complementary Cardiology, USA

Introduction: Herbal products are commonly used by patients with cardiovascular diseases but most of them do not share this information with their physicians. Although often considered harmless, herbal supplements may cause adverse cardiovascular effects from an herbal ingredient, a contaminant, or herb-drug interaction. Public ignorance and or misinformation is largely responsible for this potentially dangerous situation. This abstract reviews the known cardiovascular dangers of herbal remedies used for non-cardiac indications.

Methods: PubMed interrogation revealed 65,034 entries under 'herbal medicines', 2,963 under 'herbal and cardiovascular' and 3,750 under 'herbal toxicity'. Relevant citations were reviewed. Other pertinent published scientific material was also consulted.

Results: *Aloe*: Abnormal heart rhythms. *Arnica*: Elevates blood pressure. Black cohosh: Lowers blood pressure. Feverfew: May interfere with blood clotting. Ginger: May increase bleeding and cause abnormal heart rhythms in high doses. Ginseng: High blood pressure and increased risk of bleeding with blood-thinners. Stinging nettle: May increase fluid retention in heart failure. *Ephedra*: Increases in heart rate and blood pressure. Goldenseal: May decrease or increase blood pressure & cause arrhythmias and increase risk of bleeding when taken with blood-thinning drugs. Licorice root: May raise blood pressure and cause cardiac arrhythmias.

Conclusions: There has been an extensive evidence based review of the potential adverse effects of herbal remedies in the recent years. Some of these have identified dangerous cardiovascular effects. Education is essential in this matter. Patients should disclose herbal remedy use information and health care workers should discuss adverse effects and monitor and identify possible herb-drug interactions.

Biography

Shashi K Agarwal has obtained his Board Certification in Internal Medicine in 1979 and Cardiovascular Diseases in 1981. He is also Board Certified with the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine and the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine. He has been awarded Fellowship of the American College of Cardiology, American College of Physicians and the American College of Nutrition. He has presented over 150 scientific abstracts and published over 30 scientific papers in peer reviewed journals. His interest is in scrutinizing and disseminating evidence based data regarding the therapeutic role of various complimentary modalities and encouraging their integration into contemporary medicine.

usacardiologist@gmail.com

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