

How To Do Effective Herbal Consultations

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How to Do Herbal Consultations

Know the Law

- DSHEA – Dietary Supplement Health & Education Act - 1994

When Is An Herb Not An Herb?

- Why does this matter?
- Government standards ?
- Adulteration - “Buyer Beware”

Know Your Herb, Know Your Company

- Quality – cheaper is not necessarily better
- Buy standardized herbs when possible

Standardization?

- Your definition vs. the manufacturer’s definition
- Does it really matter that much?

Problems with standardization

- We are still learning
- Does the industry care?

Herbal Consultations

(1) The herb

Herbs can be helpful or harmful. How can you know?

- Keep up to date
- Naturaldatabase.com
- Consumerlab.com
- Do your own literature and clinical study research.

What do you need to know in order to do good herbal consultations?

- Know scientific name and common name
Ex. Eupatorium purpureum – Gravel Root, Queen of the Meadow
Eupatorium perfoliatum – (Boneset)

Gravel root is often used for urinary tract problems, rheumatism and gout. Patients should use only certified pyrrolizidine alkaloid free products.

Boneset is used as an antipyretic, diuretic, laxative, emesis, and carthartic. It is often used to treat influenza. “May” contain hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

- Standardization
- Mechanism of action
- Effects
- Adverse Reactions
- Effectiveness/Safety
- Herbal and drug interactions
- Contraindications with conditions or diseases
- Affect on liver, kidneys, heart
- Effects of lab test
- Dosage and administration
- Studies: folklore use vs. scientific evidence

(2) The patient

- A good understanding of physiology
- A good understanding of disease states and conditions
- Patient’s complete case history

(3) Keep a good relationship with the patient’s physician.

(4) Herbal Company

(5) The Law – Keep yourself legal!

(6) Where to look for information.

- Naturaldatabase.com
- Consumerlab.com

Simple Consultations

- Questions at the herbal shelf or counter
Ex. Does Echinacea really work?
Does Oscillicoccinum work?
Which company is the best?
- “I am not a doctor, I can not diagnose nor prescribe but I can give you factual information.”
- Telephone consultations – document!
- Documentation
 - (a) legalities
 - (b) never rely on your memory
- When taking a new prescription or giving a new or refill prescription to your patient.
Never assume the previous pharmacist checked about supplement use.

Ex. Grapefruit and statin drugs

Grapefruit juice inhibits metabolism and increases the absorption and plasma concentrations of most statin drugs as lovastatin (Mevacor), simvastatin (Zocor) and atorvastatin (Lipitor). It does not affect pravastatin (Pravachol). Patient response is difficult to predict due to a wide degree of individual response.

Grapefruit and Itraconazole (Sporanox)
Impaired absorption of Sporanox

Complex Consultations

- Complete case history
Ex. The patient wants something for “stomach problems” and you find out she has hypertension.

Would you use licorice?
- Get a release form from the patients other pharmacies for information on medications that the patient may have used.
- Lab test release form for doctor
Liver, kidney, thyroid function tests
Ex. Patient with hypercholesteremia
What is the cause?
 - (a) high cholesterol may be caused by hypothyroidism
 - (b) hypothyroidism can elevate cholesterol and guggulipid can stimulate the thyroid
- “I am not a doctor, I cannot diagnose nor prescribe but.”

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- Documentation
 - (a) to get paid
 - (b) legalities
 - (c) never rely on your memory
 - (d) for follow up

How to get paid for consultations

- Bill insurance now or for insurance documentation for later – patient pays now
- No insurance - Get paid now

What do you do when you get a question about something you know little or nothing about?

- Don't fake it
- Don't lie
- Have the patient come back or tell them you will call them and be sure you call them if you say you will
- RESEARCH FOR THE INFORMATION
 - (a) www.naturaldatabase.com
 - (b) www.consumerlab.com
 - (c) www.clinicaltrials.gov/ct/gui/c/r National Institute of Health Clinical Trials
 - (d) www.nccam.nih.gov National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine
www.lancet.com

Common Case Histories

- Colds vs Flu
Vitamin C, Echinacea, Garlic, Reishi Mushroom
Oscillococcinum
- Neuropathy ? What is the cause? Horse chestnut or Gingko
- Migraines or Menopause – Feverfew vs Black Cohosh

Case history #1

Francine is 32 years old and in good health except for depression. She is using St. John's Wort and a friend told her to use Gingko. Plus what about SAME (S-adenosyl-L-methionine)?

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Case History #2

Mary comes into the pharmacy and asks you what she can use for high cholesterol. In good health, used to take Synthroid but no longer needs too. She is in a high stress job and used to take Xanax.

Total cholesterol - 235

HDL - 50

LDL - can't remember

Triglycerides – can't remember but the doctor said it was a little high

(a) have thyroid rechecked

(b) what is the cause of the anxiety – could it be the thyroid

(c) consider Red Yeast Rice for the cholesterol

(d) consider Kava (safety?) or Passionflower for anxiety

Case History #3

Elaine is 55yrs old and is being treated for a psychotic illness. She takes Benzotropine 1mg twice daily, Haloperidol 5 mg three times daily and Trazodone 50mg at bedtime. She is still hearing voices and does not sleep. Her daughter says the doctor has changed her medications several times to try to find a combination that works. She says her mother looks terrible, has dark rings under her eyes and hasn't slept in over a week. She says she is going to give her mother Melatonin to help her sleep. What is your reply?

Melatonin is a hormone produced in the pineal gland. It has shown effectiveness for some sleep problems. The concern is that this patient is unstable and you do not know how taking the melatonin might affect her. We do not know if there would be a drug interaction. Discourage the daughter from giving her mother melatonin without discussing it with the physician first.

Case History #4

Greg is a 72 yr old Native American. He has night blindness and has lost sight in one eye due to a herpes infection. He is worried about losing sight in the other eye, as is the doctor. He has psoriasis. He has had pneumonia 14 times and a lot of lung scarring. He has Stomach Dumping Syndrome. A Reverse Loop Surgery was done but it made him worse. When the Reverse Loop surgery was done they accidentally cut off half of his spleen and half of his pancreas. He also had a vagotomy when he had that surgery. He has post prandial hypoglycemia. He does not have a pyloric sphincter because of an ulcer surgery done previously. Propulsid is the only thing that has helped his severe reflux. Reflux is so severe that he can only sleep two hours at a time and has to stand to get relief. Extra pillows at night do not help. He is married to a woman 30 years younger than he and he is worried about that. He has Benign Prostratic Hyperplasia and the doctor says he can take Saw Palmetto. His blood pressure is 125/82. He is 5'8" tall and

weighs 110lbs. He wants to get off all his prescriptive medications. He wants to be able to sleep at night and protect his vision.

Prescriptive medications

Triazolam 0.125mg for sleep
Propulsid 20mg – four times daily
Voltaren Ophth – 1 drop every day as needed
Vioptic Sol'n – 1 drop every day as needed
Compazine 10mg – 1 to 2 every 8 hours for nausea as needed
Pancrease – 1 to 2 caps with meals or as directed
Carafate Slurry

Suggestion: no changes on prescriptive medications
Ginger may help the nausea. Evidence indicates that ginger might be comparable to metoclopramide (Reglan) but it may worsen the reflux.

Over-The-Counter Supplements

Essential Balance – 1 TBSP every day
Calcium Carbonate 1296mg (TUMS) – 2 daily
DHEA 25mg – 1 every day (mailed from Canada)
Garlic softgel – 1 every day
Melatonin 3mg – 2 every day
Prostata – 1 every day (Saw Palmetto from Canada)
Testrex – 1 every day (Yohimbe & Mura Puma from Canada)
Cranberry Juice – 1 quart every day
Cranberry Extract 400mg – 1 every day
St. John's Wort 300mg – 1 every day for relaxation
Vitamin C 1000mg – 1 every day
Vitamin E 1000 IU – 1 every day
Vitamin A&D 10,000/400 IU – 1 every day
Centrium Silver – 1 every day
Thorne Basic Nutrients II – 2 every day
Tylenol 500mg – 1 at bedtime for arthritis

Suggestions:

Essential Balance is a USP Verified multiple vitamin/mineral supplement. Thorne Basic

Nutrients II and Centrum silver are vitamin/mineral supplements. Both are good companies but he should use only one of them. Discontinue two of them.

DHEA – if DHEA is used, use a prescriptive compounded transdermal product.

Garlic softgel – switch to an enteric coated product
(re: enteric coated is more effective and he has stomach dumping syndrome so absorption in the gut is important specifically for him)

Melatonin – stop taking it during the daytime – if it helps, how much is needed to help sleep at night

Prostata – discontinue, there is no way to tell what is really in the product. Use a Saw Palmetto product as Puritans Pride 160mg which is properly standardized and passed the assay test from Consumer Lab.

Testrex – discontinue product, there is no way to tell what is really in this product. Have his testosterone levels checked. At his age he is likely low in testosterone and a compounded prescription can be written by the physician.

Cranberry Juice & Cranberry Extract – He is taking too much cranberry. If he stays on the cranberry he only needs one ounce of the concentrate in 8 ounces of water daily as a preventative. Suggest Montmorency Cherry Juice for gout and/or urinary concerns.

Vitamins A, C, and E – doctor wants these taken and they are at safe doses.

Night blindness – vitamins specific for the eye and bilberry (blueberries) “may” help

Psoriasis – Skin Zinc is effective for psoriasis

Post Prandial Hypoglycemia – more frequent small meals – liquid sometimes

Fibromyalgia

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In the literature you will frequently read that there is not sufficient evidence that herbal or other dietary supplements will help fibromyalgia. This does not mean it is true. Studies are being done. Fibromyalgia is a difficult disease to treat and is very patient specific therefore many things may need to be tried.

Capsaicin topical – Advise patients to wear gloves or wash the hands after applying capsaicin to avoid burning or contact dermatitis. Vinegar removes capsaicin better than water.

Vitamin D – Studies have shown that chronic pain patients are frequently deficient in vitamin D. You need to use the correct one and the right amount. Many physicians will write a prescription for vitamin D2 but D3 is more effective. Carlson is a good company. D3 is not a prescription. 2000iu to 4000iu is now being recommended by many physicians for adults

DMSO transdermal prescriptive product for pain

Vitamin/Mineral Supplements

Malic acid and Magnesium

St. John's Wort for depression

SAME for depression and arthritis if present

5-HTP – 5 hydroxy tryptophan (controversy about safety – only get from a compounding pharmacy)

Guaifenesin (Mucinex)

Passionflower for relaxation

American Ginseng for relaxation

Melatonin for sleep

Valerian for sleep

Glucosamine Sulfate – many have arthritis symptoms

Willow Bark for pain

Devils' Claw for pain

Cats Claw for pain

Bromelain for pain

Lithium – very low dose use for fibromyalgia is being considered by some physicians