



BOOK REVIEWS

Pharmacological Methods in Phytotherapy Research, Vol. 1. Selection, Preparation and Pharmacological Evaluation of Plant Material: edited by E. M. WILLIAMSON, D. T. OKPAKO, and F. J. EVANS, John Wiley, Chichester, 1996. 248 pp. £50.00 (Hard cover), ISBN 0-471-94216-2. £22.50 (Paperback). ISBN 0-471-94217-0.

This new series of books is of prime importance and the timing is most welcome since there is presently a renewed interest in plant-derived compounds. The search for new biologically active plant constituents has become a major preoccupation for phytochemists in academia as well as in industry. The present volume is an attempt to bring biological techniques, mainly assays suitable to evidence biological and pharmacological properties in crude plant extracts or subsequent fractions obtained after chromatographic separation, closer to the phytochemist. Only multidisciplinary work involving collaboration between phytochemists and pharmacologists will allow the development of new efficient drugs of plant origin. This book fills a gap in

the current literature by providing plenty of up-to-date information for the selection and extraction of plants and the subsequent pharmacological investigation. The volume is arranged in therapeutic sections: gastro-intestinal tract, liver and biliary system, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, anti-inflammatory and analgesic activity, diabetes mellitus, nervous system, endocrine activity: antifertility and sex hormones. Each chapter provides precise laboratory protocols for appropriate enzyme tests and for more elaborate *in vivo* pharmacological models. Each section is documented by a comprehensive list of recent references. This excellent book is an absolute must for every scientist working in the field of bioactive natural products. The second volume of this series, dealing with isolated cell and enzyme systems, and alternatives to animal testing, is awaited with impatience.

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Flavonoids and Bioflavonoids, 1995, edited by S. ANTUS, M. GABOR and K. VETSCHERA, Akademiai Kiado, Budapest, Hungary, 1996. 442 pp. Price unknown. ISBN 963-05-7300-8.

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences first organized an international bioflavonoid symposium 30 years ago in Szeged and they celebrated this occasion by holding the Ninth Symposium in Vienna in July 1995. This volume contains the proceedings and has no less than 58 short papers. A few can be considered as review articles. For example, J. E. Cooper discusses the interactions between legume flavonoids and root nodule bacteria, while H. Wagner usefully discusses recent pharmacological results on the bioflavonoids. Again, W. Barz and co-workers report on the metabolism of isoflavonoids in chickpea cell cultures, and R. J. Grayer *et al.* describe

flavonoid phytoalexins and their role in resistance of rice plants to rice blast disease. Most of the remaining contributions are short research papers, highlighting some recent flavonoid identification or the monitoring of biological activity for a novel flavonoid. There is also a reasonable number of papers on methodology and on chemical synthesis.

Undoubtedly, this volume will be required reading for flavonoid scientists. It is not clear, however, how far other plant scientists will want or need to consult its pages. It does at least allow the general reader some perception of the general trends in flavonoid research in the 1990s.

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