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CLINICAL NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

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SECOND EDITION



LISNER

- *Salix alba* (white willow bark)
- *Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap).

Anti-epileptics

DEFINITION

Anti-epileptic herbal medicines prevent seizures, typically by improving nervous system communication with the brain. These herbal medicines act as supportive adjuncts to other treatments. They should not be relied on as the sole treatment.

TRADITION

While the disease known as epilepsy has been documented for millennia, with it affecting people such as Julius Caesar, our understanding of the disease, and therefore the birth of this herbal class, is of more recent origins.

INDICATIONS

- Tonic-clonic seizures
- Absence seizures
- Epilepsy.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Potential interaction with pharmaceutical anti-epileptic/antiseizure medication.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Bacopa monnieri* (bacopa)
- *Cannabis* spp. (cannabis) particularly high CBD extracts
- *Paeonia lactiflora* (white peony)
- *Piper methysticum* (kava)
- *Polygala tenuifolia* (polygala)
- *Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap)
- *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian)
- *Viscum album* (mistletoe)
- *Zizyphus jujube* (zizyphus).

Anti-headache/anti-migraine agents

DEFINITION

These are herbal medicines that prevent headaches and/or migraines.

TRADITION

Headache, also called 'cephalalgia', is a relatively common condition that can be caused by benign effects such as dehydration, or by serious medical emergencies such as haemorrhagic stroke or aneurysm. Migraine is defined as a severe and sustained headache that is most often accompanied by concomitant emesis, nausea and

photophobia. It is not surprising, therefore, that many herbs in this class are also strong analgesics.

INDICATIONS

- Tension/cluster headaches
- Migraine prophylaxis.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Curcuma longa* (turmeric)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Mentha x piperita* (peppermint)
- *Piscidia piscipula* (Jamaican dogwood)
- *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary)
- *Stachys officinalis* (wood betony)
- *Tanacetum parthenium* (feverfew)
- *Verbena officinalis* (vervain)
- *Vitis vinifera* (grape seed extract).

Cerebral circulatory stimulants

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines improve circulation to the brain.

TRADITION

With a paucity of ancient material to substantiate this action, and a plethora of scientific studies validating the circulatory activity of herbs such as *Ginkgo biloba*, it would appear that this is a relatively recent class of herbal medicines.

INDICATIONS

- Difficulty with memory
- Cognitive impairment.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Centella asiatica* (gotu kola)
- *Ginkgo biloba* (ginkgo)
- *Vinca minor* (lesser periwinkle).

Cognitive enhancers

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines positively affect cognition and memory.

TRADITION

Like the cerebral circulatory stimulants, cognitive enhancers, also known as 'nootropics', are of recent discovery. That said, authors such as Culpeper discussed the ability of herbs such as rosemary to address conditions of the brain and so, while the term is of recent origin, the herbs within this class belong to the realm of ancient history.

INDICATIONS

- Difficulty with memory
- Cognitive impairment.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Bacopa monnieri* (bacopa)
- *Coffea arabica* (coffee)
- *Cola nitida* (cola)
- *Ginkgo biloba* (ginkgo)
- *Paeonia lactiflora* (white peony)
- *Paullinia cupana* (guarana)
- *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary)
- *Theobroma cacao* (cocoa)
- *Vinca minor* (lesser periwinkle)

Hypnotics/sedatives

DEFINITION

Hypnotic herbal medicines induce sleep and concomitant relaxation.

TRADITION

The term 'hypnotic' is derived from the Greek *hypnotikos*, meaning 'inclined to sleep' or 'putting to sleep'.^[10] Also known as 'soporifics', hypnotic herbs are described in the ancient literature, and were even used to sedate patients prior to surgery. Pedanius Dioscorides, Galen and Gaius Plinius Secundus highly praised herbs such as the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), *Mandragora officinarum* and *Hyoscyamus niger* for their hypnotic qualities.^[11] However, modern knowledge and practice recognise the potential fatal consequences of using such herbs in crude doses. The herbs within this class work effectively to reduce insomnia and calm restlessness, and do so without the risks of the herbs used by our forebears.

INDICATIONS

- Insomnia (both falling and staying asleep)
- Restlessness and anxiety associated with poor sleep habits.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Potential interaction with pharmaceutical hypnotic medication.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Corydalis ambigua* (corydalis)
- *Eschscholzia californica* (Californian poppy)
- *Humulus lupulus* (hops)
- *Lactuca virosa* (wild lettuce)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Passiflora incarnata* (passion flower)
- *Piper methysticum* (kava)
- *Piscidia piscipula* (Jamaican dogwood)
- *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian)
- *Zizyphus jujube* (zizyphus).

Mild hypnotics

- *Matricaria chamomilla* (German chamomile).

Nervine relaxants

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines have a sedative effect on the nervous system and decrease nervous tension. Some of the following herbal medicines may also alleviate pain and spasm.

TRADITION

Interestingly, the term 'relaxant' has a close tie etymologically with 'laxative'. Both terms are derived from the Latin *laxus*, meaning 'to loosen' or 'to become less tense'.^[10]

INDICATIONS

- Insomnia (both falling and staying asleep)
- Restlessness and anxiety.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Potential interaction with pharmaceutical hypnotic/relaxant medication.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Actaea racemosa* (black cohosh)
- *Anemone pulsatilla* (pulsatilla)
- *Apium graveolens* (celery)
- *Avena sativa* green (green oat)
- *Corydalis ambigua* (corydalis)
- *Eschscholzia californica* (Californian poppy)
- *Humulus lupulus* (hops)
- *Hyssopus officinalis* (hyssop)

- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Leonurus cardiaca* (motherwort)
- *Matricaria chamomilla* (German chamomile)
- *Melissa officinalis* (lemon balm)
- *Passiflora incarnata* (passion flower)
- *Piper methysticum* (kava)
- *Piscidia piscipula* (Jamaican dogwood)
- *Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap)
- *Tilia cordata* (lime flowers)
- *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian)
- *Verbena officinalis* (verbena)
- *Viburnum opulus* (cramp bark)
- *Viscum album* (mistletoe)
- *Withania somnifera* (withania, ashwagandha)
- *Zizyphus jujube* (zizyphus).

Nervine tonics

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines restore tone to the nervous system. This class is of particular importance in dealing with nervous exhaustion, anxiety and restlessness.

TRADITION

Remedies that restore tone to frayed nerves have been listed in pharmacopoeias and materia medica for centuries, and thus belong to the traditional knowledge base. These herbs gently restore tone and vigour to the nervous system, although some, such as rosemary, can have a more stimulating effect.

INDICATIONS

- Anxiety and restlessness
- Nervous exhaustion
- Poor sleep habits.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Medium- to long-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Avena sativa* green (green oats)
- *Avena sativa* seed (oat seed)
- *Bacopa monnieri* (bacopa)
- *Centella asiatica* (gotu kola)
- *Dioscorea villosa* (wild yam)
- *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Matricaria chamomilla* (German chamomile)
- *Passiflora incarnata* (passion flower)
- *Piper methysticum* (kava)
- *Piscidia piscipula* (Jamaican dogwood)
- *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary)
- *Schisandra chinensis* (schisandra)
- *Scutellaria baicalensis* (baikal skullcap)
- *Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap)

- *Stachys officinalis* (wood betony)
- *Turnera diffusa* (damiana)
- *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian)
- *Verbena officinalis* (vervain).

Specific trophorestoratives

- *Avena sativa* green (green oats)
- *Avena sativa* seed (oat seed)
- *Bacopa monnieri* (bacopa)
- *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort).

Nervine stimulants

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines stimulate the nervous system and increase energy levels.

TRADITION

While it is only relatively recently that the mechanism of action of this class of herbs has been fully identified and understood, the herbs themselves have been used for thousands of years to give people that wanted 'pick-me-up'. Short term use (a couple of days) is usually all that is required. From a phytochemical point of view, alkaloids (methylxanthines) and essential oils are the active ingredients in these herbs.

INDICATIONS

- Fatigue, excessive tiredness
- Short-term use during periods of physical stress.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Avoid excessive caffeine use concomitantly.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Short- to medium-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Camellia sinensis* (green tea)
- *Coffea arabica* (coffee) — and other coffee species
- *Cola nitida* (cola)
- *Eleutherococcus senticosus* (Siberian ginseng)
- *Ephedra sinica* (ephedra)
- *Occimum basilicum* (sweet basil)
- *Panax ginseng* (Korean ginseng)
- *Paullinia cupana* (guarana)
- *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary)
- *Theobroma cacao* (cocoa).

Mild nervine stimulants

- *Avena sativa* seed (oat seed)
- *Nicotiana* spp. (tobacco).

Other

- Thujone-containing plants (use with caution in high dose or excessive use)
- Camphor-containing plants or their extracts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEM

Antidepressants

DEFINITION

These herbal medicines assist in alleviating depression.

TRADITION

Only in the last two decades has mental health begun to get the attention it deserves from a research point of view, and it still has some way to go. But is depression a disease of the modern ages, or was it experienced in the distant past? Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'depression' is simply a modern name for a rather old condition. Melancholy has been the subject of many authors throughout history, from Keats to Wordsworth, and from Plath to Shakespeare. The term 'melancholy' is derived from the Greek *melancholia*, meaning literally 'black' (*melanin*) and 'bile' (*khole*).^[10] Students of our herbal past will remember that excess black bile, from an ancient physiological perspective, was attributed to sadness, sullenness, gloom and irritability^[10] — what we now know as depression. This latter term comes from the Latin *depressionem*, meaning 'to press down' or 'to depress'. The term only came to mean 'dejection or depression of the spirit' in the late 17th century.^[10]

INDICATIONS

- Mild to moderate depression
- Anxiety and restlessness (generalised anxiety disorder, panic attacks, etc.).

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Caution should be exercised in patients taking pharmaceutical medications (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors [SSRIs], etc.)
- Patients with severe depression should be referred to the appropriate medical personnel.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Medium- to long-term application is advisable
- Remember that certain herbs can take up to 4–6 weeks before the full therapeutic effect is experienced.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Avena sativa* green (green oats)
- *Avena sativa* seed (oat seed)
- *Cola nitida* (cola nut)
- *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Melissa officinalis* (lemon balm)
- *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary)
- *Turnera diffusa* (damiana).

Mild antidepressants

- *Nepeta cataria* (catmint)
- *Schisandra chinensis* (schisandra)
- *Verbena officinalis* (vervain).

Anxiolytics

DEFINITION

Anxiolytic herbal medicines reduce anxiety.

TRADITION

Another term used for this class of herbs is 'thymoleptics'. This term is of recent origin, and is used in both orthodox and complementary medicine. The term 'anxiolytic' is derived from the Latin *anxius*, meaning 'solicitous, uneasy and troubled in the mind'.^[10]

INDICATIONS

- Anxiety and restlessness (generalised anxiety disorder, panic attacks, etc.).

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Medium to long-term application is advisable.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Eschscholzia californica* (Californian poppy)
- *Humulus lupulus* (hops)
- *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Matricaria chamomilla* (German chamomile)
- *Passiflora incarnata* (passion flower)
- *Piper methysticum* (kava)
- *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian)
- *Withania somnifera* (withania, ashwagandha)
- *Zizyphus jujube* (zizyphus).

Dopaminergic agonists

DEFINITION

Dopaminergic agonist herbal medicines bind to and activate dopamine receptors. They affect the neurotransmitter dopamine or the components of the nervous system that use dopamine. (Dopamine is produced in the synthesis of all catecholamine neurotransmitters, and its production is the rate-limiting step for this synthesis.)

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Vitex agnus castus* (chaste tree).

Serotonergic agonists

DEFINITION

Serotonergic agonist herbal medicines bind to and activate serotonin receptors. They affect the neurotransmitter serotonin or the components of the nervous system that use serotonin.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Ganoderma lucidum* (reishi)
- *Grifola frondosa* (maitake)

- *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort)
- *Lentinula edodes* (shitake).

Thymoleptics

DEFINITION

Otherwise known as 'euphorics' or 'mood elevators', thymoleptics are herbal medicines that elevate mood. This term is also used in orthodox medicine for a pharmaceutical medication that 'favourably modifies mood in serious affective disorders such as depression and mania'^[45] and includes medications such as tricyclic antidepressants, monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) and lithium compounds.^[45]

TRADITION

The term 'thymoleptic' is of recent origin, and is used in both orthodox and complementary medicine.

INDICATIONS

- Mild to moderate depression (affective mood disorders)
- Anxiety and restlessness (generalised anxiety disorder, panic attacks, etc.).

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Specific to the individual herbal medicines within the class
- Severe cases of depression should be referred to the appropriate medical personnel.

APPLICATION

- Best taken with meals
- Medium- to long-term application is advisable
- Remember that certain herbs can take up to 4–6 weeks before the full therapeutic effect is experienced.

HERBAL MEDICINES

- *Avena sativa* green (green oats)
- *Avena sativa* seed (oat seed)
- *Coffea arabica* (coffee) — and other coffee species
- *Cola nitida* (cola nut)
- *Crocus sativus* (saffron)
- *Eleutherococcus senticosus* (Siberian ginseng)
- *Ephedra sinica* (ephedra)
- *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- *Melissa officinalis* (lemon balm)
- *Panax ginseng* (Korean ginseng)
- *Paullinia cupana* (guarana)
- *Schisandra chinensis* (schisandra)
- *Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap)
- *Theobroma cacao* (cocoa)
- *Turnera diffusa* (damiana).

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