

Book Review

Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology by John K. Chen and Tina T. Chen. Art of Medicine Press; 2004. ISBN: 0-9740635-0-9. \$89.95

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This newly released textbook should be a welcomed addition to the libraries of every Chinese medical practitioner, student, or researcher interested in Chinese medicine herbs. Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology is a 1266 page hard backed tome covering virtually all aspects of Chinese materia medica in among the most complete manner possible as compared to most other currently available English-language texts. This text is organized into 3 parts: Part I providing the historical basis and philosophical context for the use of TCM herbs including discussions on principles of nomenclature, processing, growing and harvesting practices, and use of TCM botanicals with conventional pharmaceuticals.

Part II classifies 670 botanicals according to their traditional and standard classifications and includes nomenclature, TCM functions, dosage, cautions and contraindications, a brief overview of the chemical composition and available clinical studies, and additional commentary based on the experience of the authors. When available, additional information regarding toxicology, overdose, and herb-drug interactions, and adulterants are included. Each entry is accompanied by a black and white photograph of the botanical that can help in its identification.

Part III provides an array of extremely valuable appendices that every practitioner should find of practical use. These include: a cross reference of 66 conditions and the specific botanicals used according to TCM principles of differential diagnosis as well as the specific botanicals most appropriate for the treatment of 115 Western medical conditions; dosing guidelines; use of TCM botanicals in pregnancy; and a discussion on the trade of endangered TCM botanicals. Such information is rarely provided in standard texts. The sheer number of botanicals included in this work is monumental in itself, but the completeness of the information is equally impressive. Also included is a supplementary section of color photographs of 553 botanicals, for further assistance in identification of the materia medica.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions this text provides is the manner in which information has been presented by the authors. John and Tina Chen are native Taiwanese with a command of both the Chinese and English language and both have the requisite training in TCM to provide an expert clinical perspective to all data presented. John's additional training as a pharmacist (PharmD) gives him unique insights in understanding the pharmacology of the botanicals from the perspective of a clinician and the ability to provide detailed guidance regarding basic toxicology and herb-drug interactions.

Personally, there are many attributes to this text for which I am greatly appreciative. Firstly, most everything that I need to know about how to use the botanical both safely

and effectively is presented in a concise manner in a single text. This will help in the continued monograph development work of the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia. The philosophical discussions regarding the basics of understanding Chinese materia medica and Chinese nomenclature have greatly deepened my understanding about these aspects of Chinese herbology, thus making my personal study of Chinese herbal; medicine more rich. Equally important, there is a plethora of information and numerous herbal entries contained in this text that I have never seen in any other work. It is also an excellent reference for manufacturers requiring information regarding product formulation, substantiation files, effective dosages and other information needed for the development of safe and effective products. Any manufacturer trying to access the references alone would cost tens-of-thousands of dollars. Inexpensively priced at \$89.95, Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology is a must-have text for any practitioner, researcher, herbal manufacturer, or student of TCM. The Chen's should be commended for this outstanding contribution to the Chinese medical literature.