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Paradigm shift in herbal drug utility: Indian Perspective

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Abstract

The wealth of India is stored in enormous amount of flora and fauna that has been gifted to her. India is virtually an epicenter of biodiversity that has provided around ten thousand species of higher plants which are being systematically used for treatment of wide spectrum of human ailments. Plant-derived drugs constitute major share of different systems of healthcare systems practiced in India.

Apart from phytomedicinals, the plants are rich sources of nutraceuticals, pharmaceutical aids, flavouring agents, pesticides and cosmeceuticals. The polyherbal formulations manufactured in India are often questioned for the authencity of crude drugs used, efficacy of their active principles, safety and clinical validity of formulations and microbial load, as well as, pesticidal residue on herbal raw materials used in formulations.

It is necessary to develop a strategic approach for defining quality protocols for herbal products, keeping in view the guidelines prescribed by WHO, European Union and other global agencies. The need of the hour is to quantify the quality of herbal raw materials with the use of newer techniques of pharmaceutical analysis. The development of protocols based on scientific validation of crude drugs and their formulations is an important requirement for making Indian herb drug industry globally competitive. Rather than being happy with the current status of exporter of herbal raw materials and importer of refined phytomedicinal compounds, we must aim at becoming one of the major global leaders in manufacture and sale of active phytoconstituents.