

*Book Review***Traditional Chinese Medicines: Molecular Structures, Natural Sources and Applications, 1999**

Compiled by X. Yan, J. Zhou and G. Xie. Edited by G.W.A. Milne. Ashgate Publishing Co., 39 Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxford, UK. Price: £195.00. ISBN: 0-566-08210-1.

The first part of this book consists of short monographs of 6806 compounds which were isolated from 1500 plants used in traditional Chinese medicine. Each monograph contains a chemical name, molecular weight, chemical structure, chemical formula, melting point (for some compounds), occurrence in Chinese plants and reference in Chinese literature. The compounds are alphabetically ordered according to their chemical names. The second part of the book describes a single medicinally significant remedy (derived from plant or animal), and its effects and indications according to Chinese traditional medicine. This part of the book is alphabetically ordered according to the common names of plants, and also contains Chinese and Latin names. The effects and indications described for each plant sometimes sound unusual from the point of view of Western medicine, e.g., "effects: to dispel wind and relieve

pain, dissipate stasis and staunch bleeding. Indications: wind-damp pain (rheumatism), stomach pain, knocks and falls, blood ejection, spontaneous external bleeding, knife wound, menstrual block, menstrual pain." This part of the book may be best used by a reader familiar with the terminology of traditional Chinese medicine. Explanatory notes given in the introductory part of the book are helpful in this matter.

The book is meticulously indexed according to Chinese names, English common names, Latin origin names, and according to the chemical compound. The reference list comprises 657 entries from Chinese journals, most of which were published between 1995 and 1998. For additional reading, 18 references from the English literature are listed. This book is certainly a comprehensive source of information on chemicals used in traditional Chinese medicine, and may be useful in developing analytical methods or in pinpointing compounds in analytical pharmacology and toxicology.

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