

Preface

After the successful introduction of acupuncture to western medicine, great advances in analytical chemistry, molecular biology, genomic technology and system biology have again brought herbal drugs into the focus of basic research on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

A growing number of Western physicians become trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine and advocate Chinese medicinal preparations. However, as daily use increases, concerns about the effectiveness and safety of TCM drugs are raised by regulatory authorities and parts of the medical community which are still alien to TCM. Also China itself shows a growing interest in developing its traditional herbal medicine into contemporary drugs of global relevance. This is supported through an encouraging number of government-funded research projects in TCM all over China as well as on international level.

The authors of this book are confident that a development of TCM drugs towards a contemporary and global medicine can be achieved successfully through the application of modern research methodology. This book provides an up-to-date compilation of ongoing efforts in the further development of TCM. It covers a broad range of vital issues, starting with fundamental aspects like the present status in analytic drug monographies of TCM drugs for a quality proof and the DNA-based authenticity proof of TCM plants as prerequisites for a novel drug development. The following chapters are dedicated to individual plants, to their chemical constituents, and to their potential application. The disease indications range from cancer, stroke, mental, or gynecological disorders and describe the chemical and pharmacological aspects and the significant efforts which have already been undertaken in the development of compounds like artemisinin or its derivatives to a potential anticancer drug or Ginkgo preparations as treatment prevention and for the prevention and treatment of Dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

In the closing chapter, the editors have summarized the results obtained over the last 10 years in all areas of basic and applied research on Chinese drugs. The progress and the improvements are impressive, but the remaining shortcomings

cannot be overlooked. Therefore the editors have attempted to provide some guidelines and recommendations for the challenges which have to be overcome in the next years.

The editors regret that several Chinese experts who were asked to contribute to this book could not accept our invitation. Nevertheless, there is no question that the tremendous task of modernizing Traditional Chinese Medicine requires joint cooperation between experts from China and the West supported by appropriate resources on all levels.

We thank all authors who are eminent scientists with a high dedication to TCM. May their contributions foster a further contemporary development of TCM drugs.

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