

ESCOP Section

E/S/C/O/P

The new ESCOP monographs

By those already familiar with ESCOP monographs, now widely accepted as authoritative summaries of the medicinal uses of plant drugs, the new edition published in October 2003 will be greatly welcomed. Over the past few years ESCOP has revised the existing monographs to a higher standard, recent research data has been added and further texts have been prepared. Furthermore, the monographs are now presented in an attractive 556-page book, replacing the loose-leaf texts published in fascicules from 1996 to 1999. The end result is an impressive second edition of *ESCOP Monographs*, containing 80 up-to-date texts and covering the majority of widely used herbal drugs. 20 monographs are completely new.

ESCOP, the European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy, is an umbrella organization representing the national societies and associations for phytotherapy across Europe. Formed in 1989, at a time when the EU Review of Medicines was in progress, ESCOP was very conscious of the diversity of approaches to herbal medicines in different European countries and recognized that it was in a unique position to contribute to the harmonization process. Summaries of scientific data on the medicinal uses of individual plant drugs, discussed, refined and approved by delegates from each country represented within ESCOP, would offer a consensus of European viewpoints not otherwise available. Thus the concept of ESCOP Monographs was established and ESCOP Scientific Committee was appointed to implement the work.

A primary purpose of the monographs is to assist the EU and national authorities in their assessment of herbal medicinal products. In fact, the first 50 monographs were completed in the mid-1990s with financial support from the European Commission when ESCOP participated in the Biomedical and Health Research Programme (BIOMED 1). Since the establishment of the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products (EMEA) as the European medicines regulator, ESCOP has formally submitted its monographs to the EMEA's Herbal Medicinal Products Working Party.

On the earlier recommendation of the European Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products (CPMP) the format adopted for the texts is that of the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC), an integral part of an application for authorization to market a medicinal product for human use within the EU, ultimately providing information for both prescribers and consumers. Thus, after the definition of a plant drug and a summary of its constituents, each monograph has a section on Clinical Particulars (indications, posology and method of administration, contraindications, warnings, interactions etc.). This is followed by a very detailed section on Pharmacological Properties, summarizing pharmacodynamic properties (*in vitro*, *in vivo* and clinical studies), pharmacokinetics and then preclinical and clinical safety data. An important feature of ESCOP monographs is that they are firmly based on published scientific literature, with full citations linked to the text, and almost 5000 literature citations appear in the book. Naturally, the length of the monographs varies considerably according to the availability of data; predictably the longest texts are for *Ginkgo folium* (33 pages) and *Hyperici herba* (25 pages), while *Hamamelidis folium* has only 3 pages.

In preparing the monographs the Scientific Committee, operating as two subcommittees, invites experts on particular plant drugs to contribute to and advise on the texts. Further guidance and criticism on the draft monographs is provided by the ESCOP Board of Supervising Editors, a panel of distinguished academics in the field of herbal medicine. Since commencing the monographs, about 70 weekend meetings of the committee have been held in a variety of locations across Europe. Overall, the work has involved 50 committee delegates from 15 countries with contributions from some 30 experts on particular topics as well as from the Supervising Editors. With this pan-European approach the monographs are a major contribution to harmonization of herbal medicinal products in Europe. Enlargement of the EU in 2004 may well lead to the participation of even more countries in the continuing project.

Preparing monographs of this standard, incorporating the work of so many contributors and endeavouring to keep pace with new research data, is a formidable venture but ESCOP has proved equal to the task. The second edition of *ESCOP Monographs* is a considerable achievement. As expressed by its subtitle, it provides “the scientific foundation for herbal medicinal products”. The wealth of pharmacological, clinical and toxicological data on plant drugs offers a valuable resource for regulators, health professionals, manufacturers and indeed all with an interest in evidence-based herbal medicine.

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ABSINTHII HERBA	Wormwood	MATRICARIAE FLOS	Matricaria Flower
AGNI CASTI FRUCTUS	Agnus Castus	MELILOTI HERBA	Melilot
ALLII SATIVI BULBUS	Garlic	MELISSAE FOLIUM	Melissa Leaf
ALOE CAPENSIS	Cape Aloes	MENTHAE PIPERITAE AETHEROLEUM	Peppermint Oil
ALTHAEAE RADIX	Marshmallow Root	MENTHAE PIPERITAE FOLIUM	Peppermint Leaf
ANISI FRUCTUS	Aniseed	MYRRHA	Myrrh
ARNICAE FLOS	Arnica Flower	MYRTILLI FRUCTUS	Bilberry Fruit
BETULAE FOLIUM	Birch Leaf	ONONIDIS RADIX	Restharrow Root
BOLDI FOLIUM	Boldo Leaf	ORTHOSIPHONIS FOLIUM	Java Tea
CALENDULAE FLOS	Calendula Flower	PASSIFLORAE HERBA	Passion Flower
CARVI FRUCTUS	Caraway Fruit	PIPERIS METHYSTICI RHIZOMA	Kava-Kava
CENTAURII HERBA	Centaurry	PLANTAGINIS LANCEOL. FOL./HERBA	Ribwort Plantain Leaf/Herb
CHELIDONII HERBA	Greater Celandine	PLANTAGINIS OVATAE SEMEN	Ispaghula Seed
CIMICIFUGAE RHIZOMA	Black Cohosh	PLANTAGINIS OVATAE TESTA	Ispaghula Husk
CINNAMOMI CORTEX	Cinnamon	POLYGALAE RADIX	Senega Root
CRATAEGI FOLIUM CUM FLORE	Hawthorn Leaf and Flower	PRIMULAE RADIX	Primula Root
CURCUMAE LONGAE RHIZOMA	Turmeric	PSYLLII SEMEN	Psyllium Seed
CYNARAE FOLIUM	Artichoke Leaf	RHAMNI PURSHIANI CORTEX	Cascara
ECHINACEAE PALLIDAE RADIX	Pale Coneflower Root	RHEI RADIX	Rhubarb
ECHINACEAE PURPUREAE HERBA	Purple Coneflower Herb	RIBIS NIGRI FOLIUM	Blackcurrant Leaf
ECHINACEAE PURPUREAE RADIX	Purple Coneflower Root	ROSMARINI FOLIUM	Rosemary Leaf
ELEUTHEROCOCCI RADIX	Eleutherococcus	RUSCI RHIZOMA	Butcher's Broom
EUCALYPTI AETHEROLEUM	Eucalyptus Oil	SALICIS CORTEX	Willow Bark
FILIPENDULAE ULMARIAE HERBA	Meadowsweet	SALVIAE OFFICINALIS FOLIUM	Sage Leaf
FOENICULI FRUCTUS	Fennel	SENNAE FOLIUM	Senna Leaf
FRANGULAE CORTEX	Frangula Bark	SENNAE FRUCTUS ACUTIFOLIAE	Alexandrian Senna Pods
GENTIANAE RADIX	Gentian Root	SENNAE FRUCTUS ANGUSTIFOLIAE	Tinnevely Senna Pods
GINKGO FOLIUM	Ginkgo Leaf	SERENOAE REPENTIS FRUCTUS	Saw Palmetto Fruit
GINSENG RADIX	Ginseng	SOLIDAGINIS VIRGAUREAE HERBA	European Golden Rod
HAMAMELIDIS AQUA	Hamamelis Water	TANACETI PARTHENII HERBA	Feverfew
HAMAMELIDIS CORTEX	Hamamelis Bark	TARAXACI FOLIUM	Dandelion Leaf
HAMAMELIDIS FOLIUM	Hamamelis Leaf	TARAXACI RADIX	Dandelion Root
HARPAGOPHYTI RADIX	Devil's Claw Root	THYMI HERBA	Thyme
HEDERAE HELICIS FOLIUM	Ivy Leaf	TRIGONELLAE FOENUGRAECI SEMEN	Fenugreek
HIPPOCASTANI SEMEN	Horse-chestnut Seed	URTICAE FOLIUM/HERBA	Nettle Leaf/Herb
HYPERICI HERBA	St. John's Wort	URTICAE RADIX	Nettle Root
JUNIPERI PSEUDO-FRUCTUS	Juniper	UVAE URSI FOLIUM	Bearberry Leaf
LICHEN ISLANDICUS	Iceland Moss	VALERIANAE RADIX	Valerian Root
LINI SEMEN	Linseed	ZINGIBERIS RHIZOMA	Ginger
LIQUIRITIAE RADIX	Liquorice Root		
LUPULI FLOS	Hop Strobile		