

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

March 20, 2013

Wholesome vs. Part-some-Mike Stuchiner, MH

As an “old school” Master Herbalist, I am a very strong believer in the concept that the whole is in fact greater than the sum of its parts. In the mid 1990's when I was just beginning in this field, something big hit the herbal scene in the US and it caused quite a buzz. I remember how excited all the health food store owners were because within a month all the stores had large amounts of it on the shelves. I am speaking about standardized herbs. You would often hear things like “we can now compete with drugs as we have something safer and better”. I knew back then, that it was a big mistake for the natural food industry to take this path. Even as a beginner, something didn't seem right to me about standardizing herbs. I used to ask myself, what was wrong with using them in their whole state? For thousands of years, millions of people used this as their primary and in most cases their only source of medicine. Guess what, they CURED the problem with it!

A standardized herb is a preparation where the herb has been processed so it contains a specific amount of one or more compounds that are thought to be the reason why the herb does its job. This is the big mistake, as it is the herb as a whole that makes it work not one or two of the compounds. This is simply called isolating. When you begin isolating and taking the herb out of its whole form, you bring a host of problems and side effects along with it. The thinking behind standardizing herb's, was that they would be stronger and work faster. Are they in fact stronger? Do they work faster? The answer to both of those questions is yes. But, this comes



with a price. It needs to be understood that just because something is stronger and works faster doesn't make it better or better for you. By standardizing a whole herb which is perfectly safe and effective it becomes a "drug" with side effects. A perfect example of this is the herb Ephedra. Ephedra was taken off the market due to claims that its use produced severe side effects to the heart which had caused several deaths.

Ephedra has been used safely and effectively for thousands of years for lung, asthma and sinus problems as a whole

herb. Once it was discovered that one of the active ingredients known as ephedrine has a stimulating effect and that it can help to burn fat and help people lose weight, the drug companies got to work. They began producing standardized forms of it and made it into a drug. They then decided to combine it with caffeine to give it twice the stimulation and twice the effect. But with that came twice the danger and strength of the side effects. So, what was the end result? Today you have a perfectly safe and effective herb banned from the US market, yet the substance that caused these deaths, ephedrine, is still on the market as a drug. Interesting isn't it?

Whole herbs are superior and more effective in every way. They have not been altered, partitioned or fractionalized. Therefore, the herb is staying in perfect balance whether it is in tea form, capsules, powder or extracts. All the compounds naturally found in the herb, work in a synergistic way. The purpose of herbs is to aid your body in doing its job, therefore there is no need to alter the compound ratios in an herb. That is why you look for balance in your herbs. If a person is in need of something stronger, they have several choices. First, they can simply take more of the herb. Second, they can use a formula which is in combination of 2 or more herbs with the same purpose. Third, they can take a more concentrated whole herb preparation.

Note: making and using a higher concentration of an herb does not change the balance of the compounds in the herb/herbs. It is in fact a simple way of taking less and getting more. I have never seen a situation where someone has received better results from using the part over the whole. Therefore, there is a very good reason why a whole food diet and herbs will always be superior to anything that is partial or isolated. Think about it.

Mike Stuchiner, is a Master Herbalist graduate from the School of Natural Healing and is currently located on Long Island, NY. Mike has worked in the herb and natural food industry for the last 16 years. To date Mike has written 2 books on herbal medicine and has started his own website Eliteherbalist.com. This is an educational website for athletes on herbal medicine and whole food nutrition. Mike has been competing in power lifting for 22 years on a nation and world level with his best lifts in competition being an 800 lb squat, 565 lb bench press and a 635 lb dead lift.