

Evidence-based coverage of herb, nutrient and drug interactions

'Herb, nutrient, and drug interactions: clinical implications and therapeutic strategies', by Mitchell Bebel Stargrove, Jonathan Treasure and Dwight L. McKee. Pp xxviii+932. Price £55.99. Missouri: Mosby Elsevier; 2008. ISBN 978 0 323 02964 3

Taking herbal products or dietary supplements with prescribed or over-the-counter medicines may increase or inhibit a drug's therapeutic response or may increase the risk of adverse effects. In addition, nutrients (eg, vitamins and minerals) can be depleted by drugs. It is important that pharmacists know about such interactions and can apply this knowledge in the development of patients' care plans. This book will help them to do that. It gives detailed and evidence-based coverage of the most commonly encountered interactions between medicines, herbal products and food supplements. There are 70 monographs, about half of which are for herbs and the rest for food supplements. Each monograph starts with a tabular summary of key interactions involving the herb or food supplement with mechanisms and significance of each interaction and considerations for management.

The main body of the monograph includes a brief summary of the use of the herb or supplement, followed by a more in-depth review of key interactions with the evidence base for each interaction. The type of interaction (eg, adverse drug effect, drug depletion of nutrient), the likelihood of the interaction, its significance and evidence base are presented in useful summary form, and I particularly liked the use of icons, which provide additional clarity. References are provided and the key ones are annotated with a descriptive summary of the research and conclusions.

This is a useful reference book for a pharmacy and will help pharmacists involved in medicines use reviews or advising on the use of herbal products or food supplements in the context of conventional medicines to give evidence-based information to patients.

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