

An Essential Reference Source

review by Duncan Soule, MD□

Herb, Nutrient, and Drug Interactions: Clinical Implications and Therapeutic Strategies

by Mitchell Bebel Stargrove, ND, LAc; Jonathan Treasure, MNIMH, AHG; and Dwight L. McKee, MD

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In the quest for improved health, the use of herbs, nutrients, and nutraceutical agents has become widespread in today's society. Many people self-prescribe these substances, and often don't share this information with their health-care providers. When prescribing pharmaceutical medicines, this lack of information can lead to potentially adverse interactions. On the other hand, the concurrent use of herbs or nutrients along with pharmaceuticals also provides an opportunity for synergy and/or reduction of undesirable side effects from the prescribed medications. There is clearly a need for improved communication and cooperation between patients and their various providers to achieve optimal health. In this extensive textbook, Mitchell Stargrove and colleagues provide a much-needed resource of information on nutrient-drug interactions. This book is an incredibly useful resource for all health-care providers that will help us take a huge step forward in our efforts to collaborate and best serve our patients.

The text is well organized and packed with valuable information. There are 70 separate monographs on commonly used herbs, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and nutraceutical substances. Each section begins with a chart outlining the mechanism and significance of known interactions with each drug or drug class, along with specific management suggestions. There is a classification of various interactions specified by icons that gives the reader a quick reference regarding the character and probable effect of the potential interactions. Icons are also used to rate the strength and quality of the extensive reference sources cited.

After the initial summary chart, each herbal monograph contains information about botanical classification, habitat, and parts of the plant used; historical and ethnomedical uses of the herb; known or potential therapeutic uses; key chemical constituents; and therapeutic dosage range. A section on general strategic considerations regarding interactions comes next, including a discussion of effects by the herb on drug metabolism and bioavailability. Specific herb-drug interactions are then discussed in detail, drawn from extensive search of the medical literature. There is a CD included with the book that lists thousands of references cited for those readers seeking more information.

The sections on vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and nutraceutical agents have a similar format, starting with a chart summarizing the interactions with specific drugs, followed by well-physiologic properties of each substance, therapeutic uses, deficiency symptoms, dietary sources, dosages, lab values, safety issues, and possible adverse effects from use in various conditions. There is then a detailed discussion of each nutrient-drug interaction

with strategic considerations. At the back of the book is a very useful index of interactions for each drug class, and for individual drugs listed by both their generic and drug trade names. This allows the practitioner to access and learn about potential interactions based on either the drug or nutritional/herbal perspective.

As a physician with an active musculoskeletal practice, I especially appreciated the monographs on curcumin, glucosamine sulfate, and chondroitin sulfate, which many of my patients routinely take. I learned about interactions of these substances with NSAIDs, allowing for lower dosages and thus reducing the risk of various adverse effects from these commonly used medicines.

I very much appreciate the extensive research and integration of information done by Dr. Stargrove and his multidisciplinary team to bring this book to publication. Their efforts have resulted in a fascinating and accessible resource that deserves a place on the desk of every clinician. The book is available from many sources, including www.MedicineWorks.com, which also hosts a forum on emerging news and research involving the topics in the book and related interactions issues. An online database version of the book's contents will soon be available.