

Herbal Medicine in Depression

Clara Grosso

Editor

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Traditional Medicine to Innovative
Drug Delivery

 Springer

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Preface

This book was conceived by professionals and researchers from different backgrounds, combining ethnopharmacology, phytochemistry, pharmacology and neuroscience topics, for a better understanding of depression. According to the World Health Organization, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression, and the existing drug therapies are only suitable to treat ca. 60–70 % of patients. Therefore, this book intends to debate the current knowledge on the aetiology of depression, the mechanism of action of the available antidepressants and what routes should be followed to pursue more efficient tools for treatment-resistant patients.

This book starts with a general chapter (Chap. 1) dealing with aspects of prevalence and costs of the disease worldwide as well as the theories postulated since the 1950s to explain the pathophysiology of depression. The reader will understand that in the light of nowadays knowledge a unified hypothesis of depression is not sustained due to its multifactorial features.

Chapter 2 summarizes the mechanism of action of the antidepressant drugs available to treat depression, as well as possible new targets to take into account in new drug discovery programs.

Chapters 3 and 4 highlight the importance that cellular and animal models have had in our understanding of the pathophysiology of depression. A critical analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each model is also presented.

Since ancient times, nature has been a rich source of drugs which display higher structural diversity than the synthetic ones. With this in mind and being aware that sooner or later new antidepressant drugs have to be tested, approved and released, big pharma companies are encouraged to create new programs of drug discoveries based on natural products. Therefore, several medicinal plants with antidepressant activity were compiled in Chaps. 5–10, aiming at contributing (a) to gather the traditional knowledge of communities transferred orally from generation to generation or already established in traditional medicines and (b) to arouse the interest of the most skeptical persons. These chapters will stimulate readers to appreciate the benefits of natural products on human health.

In a more alternative and futuristic view to treat depression, new drug delivery systems for antidepressant drugs are described in detail in Chap. 11.

Finally, Chap. 12 takes into account all the issues discussed over the previous chapters and proposes new strategies that can be followed to reduce the burden of depression in societies around the world.

I sincerely hope the readers will enjoy and learn from the contents of this book.

Porto, Portugal

Clara Grosso

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