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Commentary: Complementary Dermatology

Jeannette Jakus, Daniel M. Siegel

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## **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT**

# Commentary: Complementary Dermatology

Americans spend over 30 billion dollars a year on alternative and complementary therapies. While some can be harmless but ineffective, others can be biologically active and improve or worsen disease.

Traditionally, this has been an area of medicine not well studied or covered in textbooks or training programs and as a result, has disproportionately minimal representation in journals, meetings, and conferences. While many therapies and interventions remain elusive to practitioners in Europe and North America, these centuries old rich ethnobotanical traditions continue to thrive within their many cultures. Globalization, along with an increased appreciation and understanding of other cultures and practices, has led to greater interest in the field. This has resulted in more evidence on the efficacy and utility of plant-derived therapies and other complementary approaches – many of which have proven to be of benefit to the practice of dermatology.

Over the last few years, just a handful of publications have comprehensively reviewed the use of complementary and alternative treatments in dermatology <sup>12</sup>— most of these focusing on specific conditions, such as atopic dermatitis <sup>5-7,9</sup>, psoriasis<sup>2</sup> and vitiligo. <sup>8</sup>

Larry Millikan's 2002 contribution in the Sept/Oct issue of *Clinics in Dermatology* provided us with an updated summary of the use of thermal waters, aromatherapy, and other complementary topical and physical treatments in dermatology. <sup>11</sup> In this issue, we have enlisted expert authors to update and bring enlightenment to you, our reader, about the important field of complementary and alternative medicine in dermatology. We do not claim to be an all-inclusive reference source; rather, we hope this work will stimulate others to further catalog the botanical therapeutics available around the world that have either never made it into the Western literature or are being lost as Western medical practices overlook more traditional therapies. We hope to provide you with a global survey of complementary and alternative dermatologic medicine that just might inspire you to engage in some ethnobotanical research of your own.

#### From Folklore to Pharmacy: Putting Plants into Practice<sup>13</sup>

The issue begins with Robin Graham-Brown and Mark Healsmith setting the stage with their excellent discussion of some plants and plant derived chemicals that have made it into allopathic pharmaceutical products. They also review some of the concerns and pitfalls of many of the studies involving plant derived materials.

Therapeutic Herbs Confirmed by Evidence-Based Medicine<sup>14</sup>

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