

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE IN THE III MILLENNIUM: HERBAL PRODUCTS FOR LIVER DISEASE

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In the past few years a new integrative therapeutic modality has gained such a widespread popularity in the industrialised countries to be probably the most quantitatively represented medical approach in the west. At the University of Milan it has since long been established a WHO-collaborating Center which holds a 3-year post-graduate course in Biotechnology and Natural Medicine where experts in “non-conventional” medicine and “conventional” physicians interplay along a teaching pathway.

Compounds such as probiotics, natural antioxidants and natural hepatoprotective products are now update topics in any “conventional” medical symposium. Herbal remedies for chronic liver diseases play a prominent role with a steady increase of their use. However, sound experimental researches are overshadowed by unsubstantiated empirism while clinical studies are often of poor significance.

We herewith report on the status of art of herbal remedies from an established perspective starting from the bench to bedside viewpoint. In particular, we'll report on a novel phytotherapeutic compound, i.e. YHK, which has been shown in vitro, in vivo and in preliminary pilot studies to hold a strong potentiality in clinical practice in HCV liver disease. This is of particular interest when considering that long-lasting studies have shown that patients with HCV-positive chronic liver disease and with transaminases over 80IU have a higher risk of HCC transformation. YHK seems to be a rather unique compound effectively lowering GPT without side effects.