QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SAFETY OF HERBAL DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Peter P. Fu

National Center for Toxicological Research, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Jefferson, AR 72079, USA

Abstract: In 1994, the U.S. Congress passed the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) that created a new regulatory category and safety standard for the U.S. FDA to regulate dietary supplements. According to DSHEA, a dietary supplement is considered unsafe only if it presents a significant or unreasonable risk of illness or injury under conditions of use recommended. Since then, herbal products represent the fastest growing segment of the vitamin, mineral supplements, and herbal products industry. It is estimated that there are approximately 1500 herbal plants used as herbal dietary supplements or ethnic traditional medicines. However, although it is perceived that "natural green" products are safe, clinical and scientific data from epidemiological and rodent experimental studies have provided evidence that use of herbal plants is not without risk. In general, information is limited on the genotoxicity and tumorigenicity of natural remedies, functional foods, and dietary supplements. Since the use of herbal dietary supplements grows rapidly in many countries, it is anticipated that safety considerations will increase in importance worldwide.