

S3. AN OVERVIEW OF FORENSIC HERBAL PRODUCTS

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The use of herbal products has significantly increased during the last few decades, and they are routinely used on a daily basis throughout the world. Most herbs are sold in a large number of forms, such as, raw, tablets, capsules, or tinctures, and are generally regulated as dietary supplements. They also include vitamins, minerals, amino acids, herbs and numerous other products. Dietary supplements are sold in pharmacies, natural product stores, health food stores, internet, etc, and do not require a medical prescription. Generally, consumers assume that the use of herbal medicines is safer because they occur in nature or obtain from plants. Although herbal products and supplements are advertised as ‘natural’, they are not necessarily good to the human body and free of potential health risks. A large number of active ingredients in herbal plants are toxic if overdose or without proper preparation which may cause serious illnesses, or even death. The most encountered herbal intoxications are caused by *aconitum*, *digitalis*, *atropa belladonna*, *nerium oleander*, *euphorbia* etc. The side effects of all these products are not fully known, and their safety profiles have not yet been established clearly. In recent years, several cases of adulteration of herbal products with tadalafil, sildenafil, or sibutramine have been reported in the world and also in our country. Because of these reasons, each country must develop regulatory definitions and systems that place dietary supplements, particularly botanicals, into categories of drugs, traditional medicines, or foods.

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