Classification of Crude Drugs - A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

The present article describes Crude drugs are plant, animal or their parts which after collection are subjected only to drying or making them into transverse/ longitudinal slices pieces or peeling them in some cases. They exist in natural form. Because of their wide distribution the arrangement of classification in a definite sequence is necessary to understand easily. Although each system of classification has its own merits and demerits, but for the purpose of study the drugs are classified in the following different ways: Alphabetical classification ,Morphological classification, Taxonomical classification, Pharmacological classification ,Chemical classification, Chemo-taxonomical classification

Keywords : Crude drugs , Alphabetical classification, Pharmacological classification , Chemical classification

I.   INTRODUCTION

Classification of crude drugs

- Crude drug i.e. Simple drug
- Crude drugs are plant, animal or their parts which after collection are subjected only to drying or making them into transverse/ longitudinal slices pieces or peeling them in some cases. They exist in natural form.
- Crude drugs may be derived from various natural sources like plants, animals, minerals and microorganisms etc.
- Because of their wide distribution the arrangement of classification in a definite sequence is necessary to understand easily. Although each system of classification has its own merits and demerits, but for the purpose of study the drugs are classified in the following different ways:
  o Alphabetical classification
  o Morphological classification
  o Taxonomical classification
  o Pharmacological classification
  o Chemical classification
  o Chemo-taxonomical classification

Alphabetical classification

The crude drugs are arranged according to the alphabetical order/form of their Latin and English names. Some of the Pharmacopoeias and reference books which classify crude drugs according to this system are as follows.

1)Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) 1955 (Latin)
2)Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) 1966 (English)
3)British Pharmacopoeia (BP) (English)
4)British Pharmacopoeia Codex (BPC) (English)
5)United States of Pharmacopoeia (USP) (English)
6)European Pharmacopoeia (Latin)

Advantages:
- It is simple method, in this system location, tracing and addition of the drug is easy,

- No technical person is required for handling the system.

Disadvantages:
- Scientific nature of the drug cannot be identified by this method, whether they are organised or unorganised drug.
- This system does not help in distinguishing the drugs of plant, animal and mineral source. (Original source is not clear)

Examples: Acacia, Agar, Benzoin, Beeswax, Cinchona, Cinnamon, Digitalis, Datura, Jalap, Kino, Ephedra, Linseed, Fennel, Ginger, Isapagol, Mustard, Nutmeg, etc.

Morphological classification:
Here the crude according to the drugs part are arranged (Grouped) of the plant or animal represented into organised (Cellular) drugs and unorganised (Acellular) drugs

Organised (Cellular):
- Drugs are the direct parts of the plant and are divided into leaves, barks wood, root, rhizome, seed, fruit, flower, stem, hair and fibers.

Unorganised (Acellular):
- Drugs are the products of plant, animal and mineral source and they are divided into dried latex, dried juice, dried extracts, gums, resins, fixed oils and fats, waxes, volatile oil, animal products, minerals (Solids, liquids, semi solids etc).

Advantages:
- This system of classification is more convenient for practical study especially when the chemical nature of the drug is not clearly understood.
- This type of classification is very useful in identifying the adulterants used.

Disadvantages:
- It does not give an idea about biological source, chemical constituents and uses.

- When different parts of the plant contain different chemical constituents, it is difficult to classify them.

Organised drugs (Plant) (Cellular drugs)

Plant parts	Drugs
Leaves	Datura, Senna, Vasaka, Digitalis,
Barks	Cinnamon, Cinchona, Kurchi,
Wood	Quassia, Sandalwood, Red sanders
Roots	Rauwolfia, Liquorice, Ipecac
Rhizomes	Ginger, Podophyllum, Turmeric
Flowers	Clove, Saffron, Pyrethrum
Seeds	Nux vomica, Linseed, Isapgol
Fruits	Fennel, Coriander, Dill
Stems	Ephedra
Hair and Fibres	Cotton, Hemp, Jute

Unorganised drugs (Acellular drugs)

Plant, animal, Mineral	Drugs
Dried latex	Opium, Papain
Dried Juice	Aloe, Kino
Dried extracts	Agar, Catechu, Pectin
Gums	Acacia, Tragacanth, Stericulia
Resins	Benzoin, Colophony, Asafoetida
Fixed oils and fats	Castor , Chaulmoogra, Cotton seed
Waxes	Beeswax, Spermaceti
Volatile oils	Coriander, Cinnamon, Clove
Animal products	Bees wax, Shark liver oil, Gelatin
Minerals	Bentonite, Kaolin, Talc

II. Chemical classifications of crude drugs

Here, the crude drugs are divided into different groups according to the chemical nature of their most important constituent present in the drug to which the pharmacological/therapeutic activity of drug is attributed.

Chemical constituents	Drugs
Alkaloids	Datura, Vasaka, Vinca, Lobelia
Glycosides	Cascara, Senna, Digitalis
Tannins	Catechu, Myrobalan, Ashoka
Volatile oil	Clove, Eucalyptus, Cinnamon
Lipids	Castor oil, Beeswax, Arachis oil
Carbohydrates and derived products	Acacia, Agar, Honey, Linseed Tragacanth, Starch
Resins	Colophony, Benjoin,
Vitamins & hormones	Yeast, Shark liver oil, Insulin
Proteins & enzymes	Gelatin, Papain

Advantages :
- Chemical constituents are known,
- Medicinal uses are known

Disadvantages :
- Drugs of different origin are grouped under similar chemical titles
- This type of classification makes no proper placement of drugs containing two different types of chemicals.
- Eg: Certain drugs are found to contain alkaloids and glycosides (Cinchona), Fixed oil and volatile oil (Nutmeg) of equal importance together and hence it is difficult to categorize them properly

III. Taxonomical classification of crude drugs

- is system of classification relies on the chemical similarity of a taxon, i.e. it is based on the existence of relationship between constituents in various plants.
- There are certain types of chemical constituents that characterize certain classes of plants.
- This gives birth to entirely a new concept of chemotaxonomy that utilizes chemical facts/characters for understanding the taxonomical status, relationships and the evolution of the plants.
- For example, tropane alkaloids generally occur among the members of Solanaceae, thereby, serving as a chemot-axonomic marker. Similarly, other secondary plant metabo-lites can serve as the basis of classification of crude drugs.
- The berberine alkaloid in Berberis and Argemone, Rutin in Rutaceae members, Ranunculaceae alkaloids among its members, etc., are other examples.
- It is the latest system of classification that gives more scope for understanding the relationship between chemical constituents, their biosynthesis and their possible action.
- In this system the drug are arranged according to taxonomical studies. The drugs are arranged according to their phylum, order, family, genus and species.
- It is purely a type of botanical classification or biological classification and restricted mainly to crude drugs from plant source.

Advantages:

- Easy for the classification of crude drugs

Disadvantages:

- The system is criticized for its failure to recognize the organised / unorganised nature of crude drugs in their morphological studies.

- The system fails to face into an account chemical nature of active constituent and therapeutic significance of crude drugs.
- The drugs obtained from plants having alternate leaves, flowers, seeds, capsules (Hyocyamus, Datura, Bellodonna, Stromonium) are considered with other members of solanaceae.

6. Pharmacological classification of crude drugs:

- Here, the crude drugs are grouped according to pharmacological action (Therapeutic action) of their chief active constituent (most important) or therapeutic uses

Bitter	Quassia, Cinchona, Gentian
Carminatives	Dill, Clove, Fennel, Coriander
Emetics	Ipecac
Anti-amoebic	Kurchi, Ipecac
Bulk Laxatives	Agar, Isapgol
Purgatives	Senna, Castor oil
Expectorant	Liquorice, Vasaka, Ipecac
Antitussive	Opium
Bronchodilators	Ephedra, Tea
Cardio- tonics	Digitalis, Squill, Stropanthus
Cardiac depressant	Cinchona, Veratrum
Antihypertensive	Rauwolfia
Central analgesics	Opium
CNS stimulants	Coffee
CNS depressants	Opium
Antispasmodics	Bellodonna
Anticancer	Vinca, Podophyllum, Cochicum
Antirheumatics	Aconite, Guggul, Colchicum
Anthelmintics	Quassia
Astringents	Catechu.
Antimalarials	Cinchona,
Local anesthetics	Coca

Advantages

- The special advantage is that if even chemical constituents of the crude drugs are not known they can be classified properly on the basis of therapeutic or pharmacological uses.

Disadvantages

- Regardless of morphology, taxonomical status or chemical nature, the drugs are grouped together, provided they exhibit similar pharmacological uses
- Eg: Senna, Castor oil, Jalap, Colocynth are grouped together as purgatives/laxatives because of their common pharmacological action.

IV. Chemo- taxonomical classification of crude drugs

- In this system of classification, the equal importance is given for taxonomical status and chemical constituents. There are certain types of chemical constituents which are characteristics of certain classes of plants.
- Eg: Tropane alkaloids generally occur in most of the members of Solanaceae
- Eg: Volatile oils occur in the members of Umbelliferae and Rutaceae.

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