

## **Book Review by Chris Zaslowski**

### **Botanical Medicine: A European Professional Perspective.**

A new addition to the growing number of texts from Paradigm Publications is "Botanical Medicine: A European Professional Perspective", by Dan Kenner and Yves Requena. The authors, both well known and respected within the respective countries and professions, present the reader with a current European herbal perspective. They utilise three different clinical systems as the basis for diagnosis and prescribing of European botanical medicinal substances, known in Europe as phytotherapy. These three systems- the neuroendocrine, the five phase and the diathetic- are presented as an attempt to integrate what they term as "whole system models" and therefore yield new insights so as to inform practitioners from both the western European schools of herbal medicine as well as those versed in Eastern medical herbal traditions. Yet they make it clear they do not wish to develop a unified system of thought rather to "help practitioners in their quest to create their own internalised systems of understanding for developing the clinical skills that will ultimately allow judgment to be instinctive rather than intellectual." It is with this objective in mind that the reader must approach this adventurous text, and recognise that the botanical profiles should by no means be seen as definite and irrefutable.

Some readers may be familiar with Yves Requena's work which utilises and builds upon Traditional Chinese theory, however you may not be aware of the other two systems. The neuro-endocrine models is based upon interpreting ill health in terms of the neurological control systems and their effect on endocrine gland secretion. Based on the pioneering work of Hans Seyle and the stress response, it presents a very modern perspective of life in the nineties. The other whole system, which is more foreign to us, is known as the oligotherapy or diathesis. Developed by Jacques Menetrier, this system groups patients according to typologies or diatheses which are based upon hereditary background, disease predisposition and psychological traits. Treatment involves the ingestion of trace elements that are specific to certain diathesis.

The text is divided into three main sections. The first section defines each of the three systems giving the theoretical background for developing the skills for discriminating clinical use of the European herbs. This is a very interesting section which some may find difficult to comprehend if they are attempting to interpret solely from an eastern medical perspective. It is essential however that the reader understand the theoretical background of each system in order to assess its clinical utility. The second section is the bulk of the text. One hundred and forty two European herbs are tabulated and discussed as to their action, constituents, family, flavour, five phase category, principle indication according to terrain and historical usage. As well thirty nine essential oils are described and related to neuroendocrine typologies and terrains. Section three involves therapeutic guidelines for the treatment of a range of disease states, detailing

dosage and application.

The format of the text is easy on the eye and offers extensive tables, glossary and a large cross reference index, making it a very accessible text to the reader. The only criticism I have of the text is the unfamiliar content of the text, especially if you are coming from an Eastern medical perspective. On first investigation the reader may feel as if they are in foreign territory, however on perseverance this territory will become more familiar and one will recognise that it is all a matter of perspective and that what one is offered within the covers of the text presents an exciting foray into the unique clinical world of European herbal medicine.

Containing three hundred and ninety three pages, it is published by Paradigm Publications in American and sells for US \$35. For those interesting in broadening their perspective and improving their clinical efficacy this text definitely has something to offer.