

Over 1600 potential interactions between natural products and conventional drugs identified by research group; 25% rated as severe

May 18, 2007 – STOCKTON, CA – A 55-year-old man thought he was doing the right thing for his health when he stopped by the health food store and was advised to take several supplements. He didn't realize that one of the natural medicines he began to take, ginkgo, could reduce the effectiveness of the medication he took to control his seizures. He suffered a seizure while swimming, and died.

People often think “natural equals safe.” They don't realize that some natural products can contribute to dangerous interactions.

Since 1998, researchers and editors from *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database*, the leading medical reference on natural products, have been compiling and analyzing data on how natural products interact with drugs. To date, they have identified over 1600 potential interactions.

“The potential for these interactions is huge,” says Phil Gregory, PharmD, Editor of *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database*. “Many people who take natural products are already taking several prescription drugs. With each new drug and natural product that is added, the risk of an interaction increases exponentially.”

The research team at *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* has just completed a major new initiative to provide evidence-based ratings for every potential natural product-drug interaction. Now all of these interactions have been critically evaluated and rated as Major, Moderate, or Mild. An intuitive stop-light system shows which combinations absolutely should not be used together, and which ones are of less concern.

“This is a tremendous time saver for busy health professionals,” says Dr. Gregory. “Pharmacists, physicians, and other clinicians can now simply input a list of medications and natural products that their patient takes, click a button, and instantly see which interactions they need to be most concerned about.”

About 25% of these interactions are rated as Major. About 65% are Moderate and 10% are Mild.

Some important examples include the following:

St. John's wort interacts with oral contraceptives. This combination can result in ineffective birth control and an unplanned pregnancy. Women taking oral contraceptives should use a back-up form of birth control if they take St. John's wort.

Garlic interacts with HIV medications. Taking garlic might cause treatment failure with serious consequences in an HIV/AIDS patient. Patients taking HIV medications should avoid garlic supplements.

Bitter orange interacts with heart medications, which can cause life-threatening arrhythmia. Bitter

orange has also been linked to severe side effects, including heart attack and stroke. It's one of the most common ingredients in weight loss supplements, but is not safe for most people.

Ginkgo can cause dangerous seizures in people with epilepsy. People with a history of seizure should not take ginkgo.

Black cohosh could make some chemotherapy drugs less effective, and potentially reduce the benefit of a cancer treatment.

Red clover interacts with tamoxifen. Breast cancer patients on tamoxifen often have hot flashes and often take supplements to try to stop hot flashes. These patients should avoid the many supplements that contain red clover, as this mixture might decrease the anticancer effects of tamoxifen.

Dong quai interacts with warfarin and could result in life-threatening bleeding.

A new special report is now available at www.naturaldatabase.com to educate health professionals on how to determine which drug-supplement interactions are significant and how to use the Interaction Ratings.

Thousands of clinicians throughout the U.S., Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, and other countries rely on the *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* for scientifically reliable data on natural medicines. This resource is often provided by government agencies, hospitals, or other institutions for the use of physicians, pharmacists, dietitians, researchers and others. The new Interaction Ratings are now incorporated into *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* for all subscribers.

Consumers can access this unbiased information on safety, effectiveness, and drug interactions with dietary supplements. It appears in a consumer-friendly format as *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database CONSUMER Version*, at www.naturaldatabaseconsumer.com. In addition, the editors also provide this resource to *Consumer Reports*, so that consumers can access it at ConsumerReportsMedicalGuide.org.

Researchers and editors add new information to *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* daily. It is listed as a Recommended Evidence-Based Reference. It is available in book form, on the Internet, and is downloadable to PDA. Thousands of pharmacists, physicians, regulatory health agencies, pharmacies, educators and students worldwide rely on *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* regularly.

About Therapeutic Research

Therapeutic Research is a completely independent research and publishing organization that provides evidence-based information for physicians, pharmacists, and other medical professionals. Therapeutic Research publishes *Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database*, *Pharmacist's Letter*, *Prescriber's Letter*, *Ident-A-Drug Reference*, and a variety of continuing medical education courses including live courses. Therapeutic Research accepts no advertising and provides objective information for subscribers.

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