



ISE Newsletter

January 2006, Volume 6, Issue 1

Message from the Editor

Anniversary volume 100 of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology has resumed the discussion!

Dear fellow member of the ISE,

The anniversary volume 100 of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology with its critical assessment of the past and its (sometimes) constructive thoughts for the future of the discipline has kicked off a new discussion about "What is Ethnopharmacology?" The Newsletter has therefore created a new platform – called the "Ethnopharmacology Discussion Forum" - to invite you to define your position. *Rob Veerporte* (Editor-in-Chief, JEP) and *Michael Heinrich* (Reviews' Editor, JEP; Joint Editor ISE-Newsletter) are the first to present their points of view. ISE Newsletter is looking forward to your answers (from a few sentences up to an article of 5000 words) and arguments.

2006 will be a busy year for ethnopharmacology. Get your abstract ready for the NICE Conference in Nanning, China in August. You will find all the conference information in this Newsletter. The ISE invites you to join in this face-to face dialogue, which will hopefully contribute not only to a healthy discussion in the various ethnopharmacology disciplines, but also support an interchange of knowledge from, and understanding and respect for the diverse cultures on this globe.

And, of course, my usual final point --- please circulate this newsletter among friends and colleagues. ISE will be happy to welcome many new members!

With my very best regards,

Barbara Frei Haller, Editor

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Upcoming Biannual Conference

First Announcement

***The 9th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology
NICE 2006, August 22-26, 2006, Nanning, Guangxi, P.R.China***

1. Introduction

Ethnopharmacology is one of the valuable treasures of human culture, and continues to play a significant role in healthcare and research into new pharmaceuticals throughout the world. In 1990, the International Society for Ethnopharmacology was established at Strasbourg, France following deliberations by

ethnopharmacologists from more than 40 countries. The ISE founders determined that the International Congress on Ethnopharmacology should be held every two years in different countries. The International Congress on Ethnopharmacology is considered the major international forum for scientific debate and dissemination of data for



ethnopharmacology. It has been held in France, Sweden, China, UK, USA and South Africa and returns to China for NICE 2006 (the 9th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology) which will take place on August 22-26, 2006, in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. The theme of the congress is "Ethnopharmacology and Natural Health Products". The congress, lectures and discussions will focus on the conservation, utilization and sustainable development of traditional medicine resources. More than 400 participants (including some internationally famous experts), from approximately 40 countries are expected to attend. There will also be exhibition and poster sessions for new technology, new products and research achievements related to traditional medicine, as well as the opportunity to visit local places of interest to ethnopharmacologists. The exhibition will offer the exhibitors extensive commercial opportunities and promote the internationalization of traditional medicine.

You are sincerely invited to attend this important event.

The Organizing Committee for NICE 2006

2. Congress Organization

Sponsored by

- International Society for Ethnopharmacology
- People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

The Academic Committee

Chairs:

Prof. Pei-gen XIAO (China)
Prof. Peter J. Houghton (UK)

Vice Chairs:

Prof. H. Wagner (Germany),
Prof. Nina Etkin (USA),
Prof. E. Elisabetsky (Brazil),
Prof. Daniel E. Moerman (USA),
Prof. Ke-ji CHEN (China),
Prof. Yong-yan WANG (China),
Prof. De-pei LIU (China)

Members of the Academic Committee:

Prof. R. Verpoorte (The Netherlands),
Prof. M. Heinrich (UK),
Prof. Rudi Bauer (Austria),
Prof. J.G. Bruhn (Sweden),
Prof. Johannes Van Staden (South Africa),

Prof. Jacobus Nicolaas Eloff (South Africa),
Prof. Anwar-ul Hassan Gilani (Pakistan),
Dr. Barbara Frei Haller (Switzerland),
Dr. Sarah Edwards (Australia),
Prof. Motoyoshi SATAKE (Japan),
Prof. Geng-tao LIU (China),
Prof. Xin-sheng YAO (China),
Prof. Xin-zi CHEN (China),
Prof. De-quan YU (China),
Prof. Yong-su ZHEN (China),
Prof. Guo-wei SANG (China),
Prof. Lian-da LI (China),
Prof. Chang-xiao LIU (China)

Secretary-General:

Prof. Shi-lin CHEN (China)

Vice Secretary-General:

Dr. Yong PENG (China)

The Organizing Committee

Honorary Chairs:

Pei-gen XIAO

Academician, Chinese Academy of Engineering, Honorary Director, Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences

Sheng-kun GUO

Acting Vice Chairman, People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
Heng WU

Vice Chairman, People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
Xin-wen LIU

Vice Chairman, People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Chairs:

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President, International Society for Ethnopharmacology

Shi-lin CHEN

Director, Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences

Feng GAO

Director-General, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Kang LI

Director-General, Department of Personnel, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Tian-li LAN

Director-General, Department of Science and Technology, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

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Treasurer and Member of Executive Committee, International Society for Ethnopharmacology

Yong PENG

Assistant Director, Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences

Li-shun HE

Deputy Director-General, Department of Personnel, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Ming-zhi LI

Deputy Director-General, Department of Science and Technology, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Bo WEI

Deputy Director-General, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Jia-gang DENG

Vice President, Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medical University

Secretary-General:

Jian-hua Miao

Director, Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants

Vice Secretary-General:

Xiao-jun MA

Deputy Director, Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants

Members of the Organizing Committee:

Cristina Inocencio Pretel (Spain)

Secretary, International Society for Ethnopharmacology

Xin-guo ZHANG

Director, Foreign Affairs Department, Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences

Jie JIANG

Director, Division of Specialists Services, Department of Personnel, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Wen-kui GENG

Director, Division of Science and Education, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Yue-gang PENG

Director, Division of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Fa-qin CHEN

Deputy Chief of Office, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Wei DU

Director, Social Development Division, Department of Science and Technology, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Zhi PENG

Director, Division of Internal Cooperation, Department of Science and Technology, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Cheng-jie ZHENG

Deputy Director, Division of Science and Education, Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Dai-qiang TIAN

Deputy Director, Specialists Services Division, Department of Personnel, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Qin WANG

Director, Department of Science & Research, Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medical University

Organized by

- Institute of Medicinal Plant Development (IMPLAD), Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS)
- Department of Health, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
- Department of Personnel, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
- Department of Science and Technology, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
- Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants
- Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medical University

In Cooperation with

- Guangxi Southern Natural Medicine S&T Co., Ltd etc.

3. Contents of the Congress

- (1) Opening Ceremony and Keynote Lectures
- (2) Panel Meetings and Workshops
- (3) Poster Sessions
- (4) Short Research Talks and Posters on Natural Health Products (The Satellite Conference for Corporations)
- (5) Exhibition for Traditional Medicine and Natural Health Products
- (6) Visits (to Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants, Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medical University and Medicinal Plants Market, Pharmaceutical Factory etc.)

4. Congress Themes

Ethnopharmacology and Natural Health Products

5. Topics for Panel Meetings and Tentative Invited Speakers

(1) Conservation of Resources and the Administration of Traditional Medicine

Invited Speakers:

- Dr. Tony Cunningham* (Australia)
- Prof. G. H. Prance* (UK)
- Dr. C. Leon* (UK)
- Dr. Chai Seung-Hoon* (Korea)
- Prof. Chang-xiao LIU* (China)
- Prof. Shi-lin CHEN* (China)
- Prof. Yong-ping YANG* (China)

(2) Modern Ethnopharmacological Research

Invited Speakers:

- Prof. Peter J. Houghton* (UK)
- Prof. Elaine Elisabetsky* (Brazil)
- Prof. Anwar Gilani* (Pakistan)
- Prof. Daniel Moerman* (USA)
- Prof. Rudi Bauer* (Austria)
- Prof. De-pei LIU* (China)

- Prof. De-quan YU* (China)
- Prof. Guo-wei SANG* (China)
- Prof. De-an GUO* (China)

(3) Traditional Medicine and the Development, Intellectual Property Protection of Natural Health Products

Invited Speakers:

- Prof. J. van Staden* (South Africa)
- Prof. P. J. Hylands* (UK)
- Prof. Ke-ji CHEN* (China)
- Prof. Liang LIU* (China)
- Speakers from Chinese Companies Consortia

(4) Ethnopharmacology of Ethnic Minorities

Invited Speakers:

- Prof. Nina Etkin* (USA)
- Dr. Andrea Pieroni* (UK)
- Prof. Michael Heinrich* (UK)
- Prof. Pei-gen XIAO* (China)
- Prof. Han-ru Huang* (China)

6. Congress Language

English

7. Tentative Schedule

Date: Aug.22-26, 2006

Venue: Liyuan Villa, Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Date	Aug.22 Tuesday	Aug.23 Wednesday	Aug.24 Thursday	Aug.25 Friday	Aug.26 Saturday
Morning	Registration (7:30-23:30)	Opening Ceremony & Keynote Lecture	Panel Meetings etc	Visits	1 Participants Return 2 Participants Tourism
Afternoon		Keynote Lecture	Panel Meetings etc	Keynote Lecture /Closing Ceremony	
Evening		Meeting of the Organizing and Academic Committees	Banquet & Folk Party	Satellite Conference for Corporations	



8. Call for Papers

Requirements:

- (1) Papers are required to revolve around the above-mentioned four panel topics.
- (2) Full papers containing original and unpublished results are solicited.
- (3) Abstract should be approximately 500 words and full paper should not exceed 6 pages in length.
- (4) A4 size paper with 25mm margins for top, bottom left and right should be used.
- (5) Papers should be saved as a MS Word document (.doc format).
- (6) The cover page must include contact author's name, organization, telephone number, fax, E-mail and postal address. And the topic under which you wish your paper to be considered should be mentioned clearly.
- (7) Format of "Abstract" is shown in the sample below. Please follow it.

Sample:

Immunological Effect of *Ganoderma Lucidum* Spore

Extract in Vivo and in Vitro

Ling-hua ZHANG¹, Yi HUANG², Li-wei WANG¹, Yu-kun CHIEN², Pei-gen XIAO^{1*}

¹ Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Beijing 100094, China;

² Department of Immunology, Beijing Medical University, Beijing 100083, China

* E-mail: pgxiao@implad.ac.cn

Abstract: Lingzhi (*Ganoderma lucidum*), is a well-know traditional Chinese medicinal fungus, which was recorded as an auspicious mushroom with functions of Fu-Zheng-Gu-Ben (supporting the healthy energy and strengthening the body resistance) in classical Chinese Materia Medica. Recent reports from China showed that in open clinical trials, preparations of spores had therapeutic effects on several kinds of collagen and muscle diseases including dermatosclerosis, dermatomyositis, systematic lupus erythematosus, psoriasis, myastheniagravis, etc. These diseases may be relatet to a disorder of the immune response. In order to further clarify the immune effect of Lingzhi spore extracts, we have investigated several aspects of its immunopharmacology both in vivo and in vitro.....

Submission and Publication:

- (1) Full papers are expected to be submitted to **the Academic Committee Office in Beijing** by post as well as E-mail before May.15, 2006.
- (2) The accepted papers will be published in the congress proceedings.



9. Important Dates

- (1) **Registration Form submission deadline: May.15, 2006**
- (2) **Full papers submission deadline: May.15, 2006**
- (3) **Notification of acceptance and the second announcement: Jun.20, 2006**
- (4) **NICE 2006 congress takes place: Aug.22-26, 2006**



10. Tourism (at your own expenses)

After the congress, the organizing committee will entrust a local travel agency with the task of arranging five tours for the participants. You are welcome to participate and choose from the following:

Tours:

- (1) Guilin (Three days, about US\$190 per person)
- (2) Beihai Beach, Weizhou Island (Two days, about US\$ 80 per person)
- (3) Detian Waterfall, Jingxi Tongling Canyon, Baise, Leye Tiankeng (Four days, about US\$150 per person)
- (4) Xi'an, Huashan, Terra Cotta Warriors (Four days, about US\$ 360 per person)
- (5) Liangshan, Hanoi, Haifang and Xialong Bay in Vietnam (Four days, about US\$160 per person)

11. Fees

(1) Registration Fees

Before May 15, 2006: US\$ 250 per person;
 After May 15, 2006: US\$ 300 per person;
 Full-time students (with valid student identity cards and the tutors' recommendations when registering) will be given a reduction of one-half of the registration fees;
 US\$200 for per accompanying person
Foreign participants should remit the payment to the following account:

Opening Bank Name: China Everbright Bank, Nanning Br.
 Opening Bank SWIFT BIC: EVERCNBJNNI
 Beneficiary Name: The Organizing Committee for the 9th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology
 Account Number: 78850188000018518

Please fax the copy of your bank draft/check to **the Affairs Office in Nanning** stating "Registration Fees for NICE'2006".

(2) Accommodation (at your own expenses)

The five-star hotel:

Single room: US\$65 per day;
 Double room: US\$60 per day;
 Suite: US\$95 per day

The four-star hotel:

Single room: US\$45 per day;
 Double room: US\$40 per day;
 Suite: US\$65 per day

The three-star hotel:

Single room: US\$25 per day;
 Double room: US\$20 per day;
 Suite: US\$60 per day

12. Registrations

Participants are expected to send the registration forms before May.15, 2006 to **the Organizing Committee Office in Beijing** by post, fax or E-mail, or register online
[http://www. implad.ac.cn](http://www.implad.ac.cn);
<http://www.sctcm.com>



Registration Form for NICE 2006

(Please fill in BLOCK LETTERS)

Surname :		First name :		Gender :	
Title :			Nationality :		
Organization/Institution :					
Postal address :				Postal code :	
Telephone :			Fax. :		
E-mail :					
Please choose your anticipated participation in congress : <input type="checkbox"/> Oral presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Poster <input type="checkbox"/> Products exhibition <input type="checkbox"/> Paper submission only					
Paper	Title of paper :				
	Designate the panel topic : 1 () ; 2 () ; 3 () ; 4 ()				
Products exhibition	Products name :				
	Required facilities :				
Your choice on the hotel	<input type="checkbox"/> Five-star <input type="checkbox"/> Four-star <input type="checkbox"/> Three-star				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Single room <input type="checkbox"/> Double room <input type="checkbox"/> Suite				
Your choice of tour	1 () ; 2 () ; 3 () ; 4 () ; 5 ()				
Accompanying persons	Yes () ; No ()				
The number and names of accompanying persons					

15. Contact Information

(1) Beijing (the Academic Committee Office; the Organizing Committee Office in Beijing)

Contact Persons
Dr. Yong PENG;
Ms. Tina HU

Postal Address
The Academic (Organizing) Committee Office for the 9th International Congress on
Ethnopharmacology
Institute of Medicinal Plant Development (IMPLAD),
Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS)
No. 151, Malianwa North Road, Haidian District,
Beijing 100094,
P.R.China

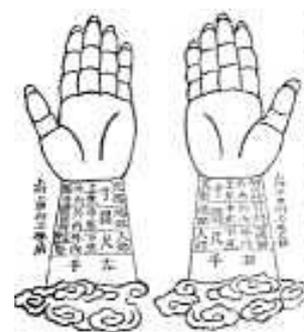
Tel : +86-10-62818235
Fax. : +86-10-62899714
E-mail : nice@implad.ac.cn
Website : <http://www.implad.ac.cn>

(2) Nanning (the Affairs Office; the Organizing Committee Office in Nanning)

Contact Person
Ms. Wen-li ZHANG

Postal Address
The Affairs (Organizing Committee) Office for the 9th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology
Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants
No.189, Changgang Road,
Nanning 530023, Guangxi,
P.R.China

Tel : +86-771-5625591
Fax. : +86-771-560
3632
.32..
hh 801290
E-mail : nice@implad.ac.cn
Website : <http://www.sctcm.com>



Ethnopharmacology Discussion Forum

“Ethnopharmacology Discussion Forum” is a new section in the ISE Newsletter to analyse all aspects of the question “What is ethnopharmacology?”

Please send us your comments to: j.ethnopharmacol@pharmacy.ac.uk.

Lengths of contributions: one sentence up to an article of 5000 words. Please provide full name and email-address. Anonymous comments will not be published.



Ethnopharmacology an interdisciplinary field

Ever since the start of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology, the editorial board and the referees have been engaged in an ongoing discussion regarding what kind of papers the journal should publish. In my opinion any discussion is very difficult without a definition of the field. I think it is not the task of the journal to define the field that is first of all a task for the field itself. The Journal of Ethnopharmacology has always presented itself as the platform for scientific communication for the *interdisciplinary* field of ethnopharmacology. The crux of this objective is in the word interdisciplinary. It means that JEP should be a platform where different disciplines communicate. These single disciplines all make their contribution to the knowledge on traditional medicines, which eventually could lead to evidence based traditional medicine, and thus to more effective and safe applications.

The consequence of an interdisciplinary field is that many studies will be performed by a single discipline, using the information obtained from other disciplines, possibly from studies published in JEP. The results of these studies will again feed the other disciplines (hopefully via JEP) with information that could be useful for their studies.

In the discussion of the past years many times people expressed the wish to have more “real” ethnopharmacological studies published. In which the word “real” is matter of discussion. In my view, we will always have many studies from single disciplines, because of the platform function of the journal. We need to thrive for a balance between different disciplines, and particularly more multidisciplinary studies in the field of

ethnopharmacology could be published. However, worldwide there are not many groups working in a multidisciplinary way, as we can conclude from the fact that we can find only a few such truly multidisciplinary studies in the literature. Of course we need to encourage such studies. The journal could play an important role in this, as it is a platform where the different disciplines meet, and where one may find new partners for future multidisciplinary studies.

To further improve its platform function JEP will try to keep stricter to its scope. For example papers studying activities, which are not related to the traditional use, will be rejected. We will soon publish “**The Rules of 5**”, in which we have defined some basic rules that should help everyone see if his/her paper fits the journal, and which will help the editors and referees to make decisions. In parallel we are trying to get a series of reviews in the journal that describe the state-of-the-art for a certain field and particularly the methodology used, e.g., what are the minimum requirements for a study to confirm an antimicrobial activity of a medicinal plant. An important aspect is how to define activity. Too often active concentrations are mentioned which are not very realistic. In studying traditional medicines we should be honest. When we find activity only at a high dose or even no activity at all, this is also important; there is no reason to call something active if the active dose is very high. It does not necessarily mean that the medicine is not active; it could also mean that our methods were not suited for proving activity, so we should look for other methods. In that connection, in Volume 100 of the journal, I advocated the use of a more holistic approach to the study of the activity of traditional medicines using systems biology.



Ioannidis' (2005) statement that in "many current scientific fields claimed research findings may often be simply accurate measures of the prevailing bias," I think, is quite true also for ethnopharmacology. The Nobel prize committee set an excellent example this year by awarding the prize to the researchers who against all generally accepted theories, spent many years to prove that ulcers are due to a microbial infection. Interestingly the Dutch word for ulcer (*maagzweer*) could have been a good hint for a microbial infection (*zweer*) for those who would have been very open minded. This brings me to the point that cultural concepts regarding health and disease may lead to new ideas about possible causes (and treatments [comment in brackets added by JW]) of a disease.

Maybe ethnopharmacology should reach out more to the medical world, to the researchers studying diseases from a more fundamental point of view. Now the majority of the studies come from social, botanical and pharmaceutical sciences. At least we can see that with globalization the interest for other medical systems is increasing exponentially, which will be reflected in an exponential growth of the number of studies in the field of ethnopharmacology. With the already existing extensive ancient documentation on, e.g., Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine, we may particularly expect a large increase in studies on pharmacological activity. At the same time, ethnopharmacology faces a major challenge in

documenting the traditional knowledge from minorities all over the world, knowledge that under the pressure of globalization is rapidly disappearing.

In summary, if we think that the journal is not balanced with the type of papers we publish we need to reach out to those disciplines that we want to see more studies of. They need not be multidisciplinary; single discipline studies are very welcome, as they should serve as an invitation to other disciplines for future collaboration in multidisciplinary studies. Maybe the International Society of Ethnopharmacology should make an analysis of its own membership and see what disciplines are represented. Does it cover all disciplines needed for fruitful ethnopharmacological projects? In any case it is my feeling is that we should particularly improve links to the medical and social sciences.

Rob Verpoorte
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Ethnopharmacology
Division of Pharmacognosy,
Leiden University, The Netherlands.
E-mail: jethnoph@chem.leidenuniv.nl

Ioannidis JPA (2005) Why most published research findings are false. *PLOS Medicine* 2, 696-701



The Rules of 5 ***JEP Editorial Announcement***

Globalization has resulted in a rapid increase in interest in the various medical systems in the world, and consequently more detailed research of these fields. Over the last 25 years many studies focusing on local and traditional ethnopharmacological knowledge have appeared in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*. Today, a multitude of topics are covered under the general headline of 'ethnopharmacology'. Ideally we hope to attract truly multi- or transdisciplinary

manuscripts with a strong basis both in socio-cultural and natural sciences.

Obviously the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* is also affected by this increased interest in traditional medicines. We clearly notice a rapidly increasing number of manuscripts being sent to the Journal, and a steady increase of the impact factor; a very positive trend, but one that carries some problems. The major one is that the journal can only publish about 300 papers per year, whereas the number of submitted manuscripts is now up to about 2000 per year. We thus need to reject many more than we did in the past. The other problem is that it is difficult to find referees that can help



us to maintain the high standards of the journal. As we all know, we are under increasing pressure to publish more, and teach more, without receiving more money for research. The time for reviewing manuscripts, which is always on a voluntary basis, is thus receiving lower priority.

For this reason more and more journals will start a fast track rejection system in which the editors shortly after receiving a manuscript will make a decision whether the manuscript will enter the review system, or whether it is rejected immediately, based on certain criteria set by the Editorial Board. We recently adopted this approach, with the main two criteria: *outside scope* or *too preliminary*. Based on this about one out of three papers is now rejected shortly after it is received at the Editorial office. Of course we now receive many queries from the authors as to why their paper is rejected, as in the past such papers have been published. It means we need to explain this more extensively to all authors. This editorial is only one step in the process of explaining the background of this new policy. It is important that everyone, i.e., authors and referees, know the criteria we will use for this rapid rejection procedure.

Therefore, the editors and editorial board have developed the "Rules of 5" for publishing in *JEP*. We have produced five clear criteria that each author needs to think about before submitting a manuscript and setting the whole process of editing and reviewing to work. The rules should also be useful for the reviewing of papers. The rules are the following:

1. Out of scope

The paper should report on traditional use or present results on pharmacological or toxicological studies (positive or negative) that are directly related to the traditional use. These data should eventually contribute to evidence-based traditional medicines.

Immediate rejection criteria:

- I. Papers that use ethnopharmacology as an excuse for studying an activity which is not related to the traditional use are not accepted, e.g., antitumor effect of plant used against diabetes.

- II. Testing of extracts or plant parts that have no relation to the traditional use, e.g., pharmacological and phytochemical, e.g. pharmacological and phytochemical studies on a series of plants of one genus, of which only a few are actually used traditionally, do not fit in the scope.
- III. Papers on health effects of food are not in the scope of the journal.
- IV. Studies on pure compounds are not accepted if not clearly related to a plant and its traditional use.
- V. Random screening of plants for activity.

2. Too preliminary

A paper must be based on a thorough and extensive study, using proper controls.

Immediate rejection criteria:

- I. Antimicrobial activity with single dose, or very high dose, measuring only inhibition zones and no MIC values, no information on type of activity (cidal or growth inhibition), microorganisms not relevant for use.
- II. Single dose studies with very few animals, no dose-response studies.
- III. In-vitro assays with single dose or very high dose.
- IV. No proper controls.
- V. Repetition of a simple bioassay for yet another extract or plant.

3. In-vitro Antioxidant activity

Antioxidant activity is present in all plants. Screening with in-vitro assays thus has little meaning if no clear evidence is given for in-vivo activity.

Immediate rejection criteria:

- I. Only chemical in-vitro assays
- II. No direct connection with claimed traditional use
- III. No positive controls



- IV. Isolation of very common antioxidant compounds (e.g. flavonoids)
- V. Not at a relevant dose in in-vivo situation

indigenous people or local government.

4. Ethnopharmacology and ethnobotanical surveys without quantitative data

To be able to make choices for further studies is important, to have information how frequently plants are cited in surveys, and to have, if at all possible, cross checks for the information.

Immediate rejection criteria:

- I. Species are listed uncritically without giving information about the cultural importance of these species e.g., by giving the frequency of citation of use by informants, or no clear cross verification of information.
- II. No information about the ethnographic background of the study or about the methods used.
- III. No information about identification and documentation of the plants (voucher specimen).
- IV. The ethnopharmacological frame of reference/theory that forms the basis of the study is not spelled out, e.g., no information regarding disease diagnosis and practices related to specific plant medical uses were observed and verified.
- V. No information on the protection of the biodiversity rights of

5. Lack of novelty

The study must represent a novel approach to the study of the activity, i.e., not more or less repeating what has already been published with similar results, but, e.g., only using another extract of the same plant, or, in the case of antimicrobial activity, some other microorganisms. Immediate rejection criteria:

- I. Repetition of well known data
- II. Use of non-specific pharmacological test methods or of phytochemical screening methods
- III. Use of pharmacological assays or clinical trials which are not internationally recognized as valid and relevant
- IV. Identification of only well known ubiquitous compounds with little or no relation to activity (e.g., vitamins, sitosterol)
- V. List of use of plants in certain area that confirms already known regional practices

R. Verpoorte, Editor-in-Chief
P.J. Houghton, Editor
M. Heinrich, Reviews Editor
P.K. Mukherjee, Associate Editor
G. Schmeda Hirschmann, Associate Editor
J. van Staden, Associate Editor
E. Yesilada, Associate Editor



What is ethnopharmacology?

As we are all aware, the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* published by Elsevier is the official journal of the ISE. It is a journal with a multidisciplinary perspective and a claim for integrating socio-cultural and natural sciences. This certainly is an ongoing challenge and some have criticised the strong focus on the pharmacological and other biomolecular sciences. Recently we celebrated

the 100th volume of the journal which roughly coincides with 25 years of publication. This volume offered the opportunity to reflect upon the current situation in the field (e.g., Jaeger 2005, Verpoorte et al, 2005, Etkin and Elizabetsky 2005) and to assess how the field can be developed in the future. However, quite surprisingly few of these contributions (e.g., Etkin and Elizabetsky 2005) addressed the simple question ‘What is this field all about – what is ethnopharmacology? Should we assume that we all have similar



definitions and thus a similar vision regarding the field? As the Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Robert Verpoorte points out in a note in this newsletter, we need to 'thrive for a balance between different disciplines' and certainly the Newsletter is an ideal place for such a discussion about the right balance.

A well known definition appeared in the first issue of the journal and was written by its founding editors: Professors Laurent Rivier and Dr. Jan G. Bruhn: "... a multidisciplinary area of research, concerned with the observation, description, and experimental investigation of indigenous drugs and their biological activities and the active substances of plants and animals used in the traditional medicine of past and present cultures." This definition highlighted the strong interest in experimental methods – a tradition which certainly has continued until today. Later definitions have built upon it, but have put a greater emphasis on the responsibilities of ethnopharmacologists (for an overview and discussion see Etkin and Elisabetsky 2005). However, let's look at it from a different perspective. The *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* continues to develop in exciting ways and is now one of the leading journals in the field of medicinal plant research. One way to evaluate the journal's influence is with the help of the Science Citation Index (ISI). The strong link with medicinal plant research is highlighted by the high number of citations the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* receives from such journals as *Phytotherapy Research*, *Pharmaceutical Biology*, *Fitoterapia*, and *Phytomedicine* and the frequency with which authors in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* cite articles from *Planta medica*, *Fitoterapia*, *Phytochemistry*, and *Phytotherapy Research*. As a sideline, it is interesting that comparatively little of the work published in our journal is cited in *Phytochemistry*, *Economic Botany* or *Planta Medica*. So do we need to redefine 'our' field of research? Should we aim for a more natural sciences based approach? While in the Journal we have the opportunity to develop the field on the basis of peer-reviewed articles, the newsletter is ideal

for a lively discussion about the field's foundations: 'What is ethnopharmacology?' As a start, I hope many members will contribute to this by sending a short (a sentence or a paragraph) 'definition' or a statement about the field to the Newsletter. We will then publish these in the next newsletter, but hope that it also encourages current and future authors to (re)consider their position and to make sure that truly multidisciplinary articles reach the journal.

Another extended forum for discussion will be a new section in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology: Commentaries*. These will be short (max 2 – 3 printed pages or 2500 words), peer-reviewed, critical discussions about crucial aspects of the field but most importantly methodological and conceptual-theoretical developments in the field. Details will be published soon in an editorial in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*. So, watch this space and our journal. I hope that the Commentaries will further strengthen the dialogue between the numerous disciplines interested in ethnopharmacology. I look forward to your comments and commentaries.

Michael Heinrich
Reviews' Editor, *J. of Ethnopharmacology*
Joint Editor ISE-Newsletter
and former President of the ISE
Centre for Pharmacognosy and Phytotherapy
The School of Pharmacy,
University of London
E-mail: j.ethnopharmacol@pharmacy.ac.uk

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Fieldnotes

An effort for TK preservation: Ghorban Mohammad Khosravi's manuscript

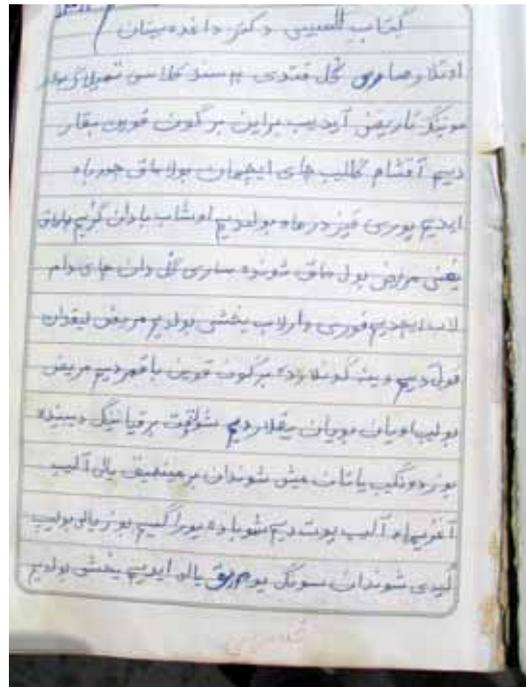
Although traditional knowledge (TK) of medicinal plants is an important guide in searching for new drugs, TK is primarily part of the cultural heritage of the society of origin. However with the current rate of biodiversity loss, species extinction, acculturation and modernization, TK is at an even greater risk of extinction than botanical species.

Documentation of traditional and folk medicines and understanding traditional medical concepts within the cultural context in which these medicines are used is a priority. This strategy of documentation should be applied not only in the hotspot areas, but also all over the world. The following communication relates the story of the loss of traditional knowledge in Turkmen Sahra and the efforts *Ghorban Mohammad Khosravi*, an uneducated shepherd, farmer and herbalist, has taken to preserve and transmit his knowledge of medicinal plants to the next generations.

Ghorban Mohammad Khosravi was from the Nokhur tribe of the Turkmen ethnic group, who live in the Turkmen Sahra of Golestan province and the western parts of newly established Northern Khorasan in northeastern Iran (see map below). With a population of over 700,000, the Turkmen are the largest ethnic group in Golestan Province. The Turkmen consist of a number of distinct tribes; the Yomut, Goglan and Nokhur tribes are well represented in Golestan and the northwestern part of Northern Khorasan Province. There were traditionally two types of Turkmen, the *chomur* or agrarians, and *charwa* or pastoralists who were migratory, but now most of the Turkmen live in towns and villages.

I met Khosravi's young son during ethnobotanical fieldwork in northern Khorasan in 2004. He told me that his father was an herbalist and that he had passed away, but had left a handwritten manuscript on medicinal plant use. The son gave me directions to his deceased father's house. The family was originally from Baghligh village in the Gergelan region but now resides in the city of

Bojnurd. In May 2005 I was able to visit Bojnurd to see the manuscript.



Picture 1:
Ghorban Mohammad Khosravi's handwriting

In addition to the manuscript, Khosravi also left a small collection of plant samples. I received permission to take some of the samples and to photograph the manuscript.

An older son told me that his father had been illiterate and did not have any formal education, but was a very clever man and taught himself to write. I was amazed that a barely literate person could produce such an interesting and beautiful composition in the Turkmen language. I decided to translate the manuscript into English to show the importance and urgency of documenting local bio-cultural knowledge in this area. The manuscript resembles a diary and includes descriptions of Khosravi's experiences using medicinal plants, descriptions of plants and their medicinal effects, but has no drawings.

The following text is a translation of some paragraphs from Khosravi's manuscript. The manuscript also contains several poems towards the end, but I am not certain whether or not they are also Khosravi's original writing. Due to my ethnobotanical fieldwork experience in the area, I could usually determine the plant genus based on the folk names. However, not all the plants could be identified to species, because folk names did not always distinguish between two closely

related species or even closely related genera. The text starts as follows:

“Let me say something about the description of *sari-gul* (*Achillea biebersteinii* Afan.); One day I was out grazing my sheep. When I returned home that night, without drinking tea, I ate *chorba* (a local soup). Immediately I fell sick with chills and fever. Then I made a tea from *sari-gul* and drink a glass of it and it was my remedy; I immediately got well.

One day, I went to one of my friends (*Ghoshā Fulat*). His son was sick and when I shook his hand, his body was as hot as an oven. He had been sick for three days. I took some *sari-gul* from my pocket and made a tea from it. He drank a pot of *sari-gul* tea and then got up and told me, “I’m well.”

There is a plant named *dermana turki* (*Teucrium* sp.), with grayish color, and flowers and seeds on the top. A tea from the dried aerial parts is useful for gonorrhoea, [urine] retention, dysuria and cardiac pain. My father *Bayram Geldi Sufi* had been suffering from [urine] retention and dysuria for 9 days. Then he drank a tea of *dermana turki* and after one hour he was relieved.

There is a plant named *sighir ghurigh* (*Verbascum* sp.) that is up to 150 cm high. The leaves are similar to goat ear with yellow flowers. When a snake bites a person, *sighir ghurigh* should be fastened on both sides of the bitten part, then cut the skin with a blade and put the leaves of *sighir ghurigh* on it. Also if

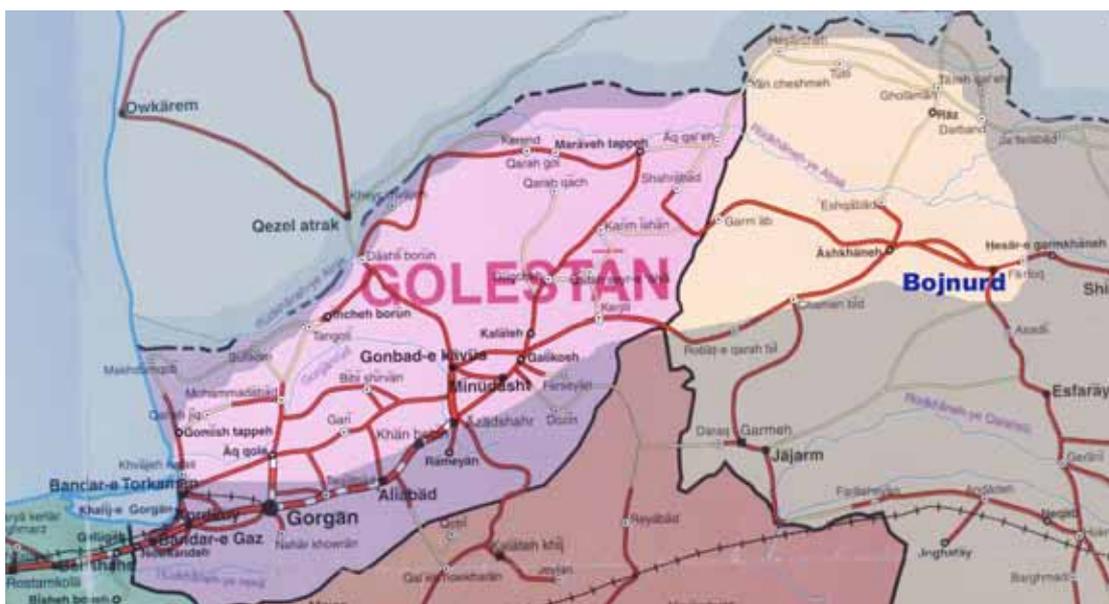
the stem of the plant is eaten raw that will be useful.

There is an herb named *sarisolmaz* (*Calendula* sp.), which is a useful remedy for kidney stones. Also *chaqir-tikan* (*Tribulus* sp.) is a plant which grows in watermelon fields and spreads on the ground. It is also a good remedy for kidney stones.”

Khosravi mentioned some other plants that are useful for headache, kidney stones, stomachache, vitiligo, hemorrhoids and body pain. He mentioned in his writing: “These plants are the means, and health is in the power of God, but because I’ve practiced and experienced these remedies, I’m writing them so that they will be helpful to my other brothers.”

The moment *Ghorban Mohammad Khosravi* died most of his knowledge was lost. Only a fragmentized transmission to the next generations was possible through his efforts. We can not even begin to estimate the amount of undocumented traditional knowledge we are losing everyday. Much effort and work are needed in order to create a detailed documentation of traditional knowledge (oral or written) and a pharmacological evaluation of these remedies.

Abdolbaset Ghorbani
Traditional Medicine &
Materia Medica Research Center
Tehran, Iran; www.itmrc.org



Map 1: Northern Khorasan, NE of Iran. With Bojnurd, home of relatives of the author of the manuscript.

More Upcoming Conferences

- April 6-7, 2006 - Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, UK -- Natural Products Active Against Human Pathogens --- The Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences APSGB ---- <https://www.apsgb.co.uk> (Events)
- April 26-28, 2006 – Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Regent’s Park, London, UK -- Pharmacovigilance of Herbal Medicines: Current State and Future Directions --- Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (principal organizer) ---- www.rpsgb.org/science or Lisa Gilbert at science@rpsgb.org
- May 28-31, 2006 - Swiss Alpine Resort of Leysin, Switzerland -- Natural Products: A Chance for the Future of Mankind --- 4th ISDNP International Conference on Natural Products/ The International Society for the Development of Natural Products and the Geneva-Lausanne School of Pharmacy ---- <http://www.unige.ch/isdnp>
- June 5-9, 2006 - Khon Kaen University, Chiang Mai University, Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden and the Royal Institute of Thailand, Chiang Mai, Thailand -- Ethnobiology, Biodiversity and Community Development --- 47th Annual Meeting of the Society for Economic Botany, 10th International Congress of Ethnobiology (ICE) ---- <http://guallart.dac.uga.edu/ISE/congresses.html> or <http://www.econbot.org>
- June 19-22, 2006 – Lublin, Poland -- The Application of Chromatographic Methods in Phytochemical & Biomedical Analysis --- 5th International Symposium on Chromatography of Natural Products (ISCNP) ---- www.pharmacognosy.org
- August 29-September 2, 2006 – University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland -- International Congress and 54th Annual Meeting of the Society for Medicinal Plant Research / GA --- <http://www.ga2006.fi/>
- October 29-November 1st, 2006 - Tel-Aviv, Israel -- The Fourth International Conference on Mechanisms of Action of Nutraceuticals (ICMAN 4) --- <http://www.evetopf.org/icman4/>
- November 20-24, 2006 – Club Amigo Hotel, Varadero Beach, Cuba -- FAPRONATURA 2006 / I Simposio De Farmacología De Los Productos Naturales / I Simposio De BLACPMA / I Reunión Del Consejo Editorial De BLACPMA / III Taller De Farmacovigilancia / IV Taller International De Ensayos Clínicos ---- <http://www.scf.sld.cu/natprod/portada.htm> - OR <http://www.scf.sld.cu/natprod/en/portada-en.htm>
- November 30-December 2, 2006 – Mexico, D.F., Mexico – Primer Congreso Iberoamericano de Fitoterapia --- More information under: 4509@axtel.net (Xavier Lozoya, Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS), and Programa Iberoamericano de Ciencia y Tecnología para el Desarrollo (CYTED))

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Barbara Frei Haller, PD PhD (Editor)
bfreihaller@bluewin.ch
Bröl 25, CH-7546 Ardez/ Switzerland

Deadline for next issue: 06.06.06

Michael Heinrich, Prof. (Co-Editor)
michael.heinrich@ulsop.ac.uk

Janna Weiss, Ph.D., L.Ac. (Proofreader)
jweiss@research.haifa.ac.il

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