

Appendix 3: WESTERN HERBAL MEDICINE CORE CURRICULUM

A) Materia Medica

Aims:

To ensure a sound knowledge and understanding of medicinal plants. To encourage students to take a broad and continuing interest in medicinal plants and to appreciate issues surrounding their conservation and sustainability.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course the student will:

- Be able to recognise and identify a wide range of medicinal plants, both growing and dried; have knowledge of basic botany; have an understanding of the taxonomy and morphology of medicinal plants.
- Be able to classify plants according to their actions, e.g. as stimulants, astringents, etc.; relate the action of an individual herb to its indications in treatment.
- Understand the pharmacological actions of medicinal plants on the body in health and disease and know which specific tissues, organs and physiological systems are affected by administration of a given medicinal plant; be aware of the influence of plant remedies on the psycho-social and spiritual aspects of a patient's being.
- Understand and appreciate the relative merits of whole plant preparations, standardised extracts and isolated plant constituents for application in holistic treatment.
- Know in detail the dosage range of the medicinal plants studied.
- Know in detail the contraindications and incompatibilities of the medicinal plants studied.
- Have developed research skills so that he/she will be able to continue to learn more about the materia medica throughout their life of professional practice (as explained in module 7 "Core Curriculum on Practitioner Research").
- Have awareness of the role of rationality, intuition and experience in prescribing treatment.
- Have awareness of the relative merits of simples and/or complex herbal prescriptions.
- Be aware of the debate concerning the use of native versus foreign herbal remedies.
- Be aware of conservation issues as they relate to herbal medicine. Be aware of the merits of organic and wildcrafted herbs.

Outline of Syllabus Contents

1 *Materia medica*:

Materia medica is the core subject in medical herbalism. This subject examines individual plant remedies and discusses the botanical, pharmacognostic, pharmacological and therapeutic aspects of each remedy, along with its indications in treatment, contraindications and incompatibilities, and posology, including dosage indications for elderly patients and children.

The plants are discussed from a traditional therapeutic aspect and modern scientific research and clinical experience is used to supplement and/or extend the understanding of the plant as a medicinal remedy. Specific indications are studied, as are herb combinations and synergy, and information sources and literature on materia medica.

2 *Botany*:

Botany is an important tool for the medical herbalist. The aim of this subject is to develop the students' skills in the use of botanical reference material, and in the field identification of plants. These skills are developed from teaching in plant taxonomy and morphology, and also the role played by taste, smell and touch in identifying plants. The course also includes an introduction to plant physiology.

3 *Environmental & Conservation*:

Discussion of issues surrounding the conservation and sustainability of medicinal plants. Discussion of the relative merits of global versus local herbalism. Have an understanding of the procedures used to ensure correct species identification on entry to, or in the UK.

Assessment

Assessment should be partly by examination, partly by project work such as the creation of a database.

B) Therapeutics

Aims

To enable students to comprehend the clinical application of the herbal materia medica, using appropriate conventional and complementary diagnostic skills to select herbs and dietary regimes to treat a range of conditions in a holistic way.

To ensure that the student has sufficient knowledge of therapeutic skills to take individual responsibility for sensitive and competent patient care and throughout a course of treatment.

To continue to develop research skills so that the student will be equipped to continue to add to their knowledge of materia medica and therapeutics throughout a lifetime of professional practice.

To expand students' awareness of the roles of rationality and intuition in prescription and treatment.

Minimum level: 3 of an undergraduate course.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course the student will be able to:

1. Determine a specific treatment strategy, selecting appropriate herbal prescriptions and dietary plans for a wide range of conditions, as specified in the syllabus content of Core Curriculum no. 3, and having regard to the pattern of disharmony particular to the individual concerned.
2. Be able to select for any particular disease or condition a range of possible herbal treatments, explaining the difference of approach in each case.
3. Be able to adapt a prescription appropriately to respond to changing circumstances in the progress of an individual treatment. Know how to deal appropriately with adverse reactions, and how to recognise and respond to a healing crisis.
4. Be able to give an account of factors involved in prognosis.
5. Fully understand the factors involved in selecting appropriate dosages of herbs and treatments for particular individuals and conditions, including dosages for the elderly, children and infants. To have full knowledge of schedule III herbs, and of contraindications in pregnancy.
6. Recognise the limits of herbal treatment and his/her own ability and be able to refer when necessary.

Outline of Syllabus Contents

1 *Theory and Philosophy of Health and Disease:*

Study of the underlying philosophies behind Western herbal practice, and highlighting awareness of the differences and the links between the orthodox and the complementary theories of health and dis-ease, with specific reference to factors determining the evolution of a wide range of conditions, such as described in the syllabus of Core Curriculum no. 3, "Clinical Sciences".

2 *Strategies:*

Application of the materia medica; specific herbal and nutritional protocols for the range of conditions specified, and how to respond to individual needs within the basic protocols. Appropriate dosage levels for various conditions and individuals, and how and why these may be varied according to the specific needs of each case.

Treatment of multiple conditions: prioritising in selection of basic aims of treatment; understanding the importance of identifying the underlying pattern of disharmony as against treating specific symptoms.

Identifying response patterns in treatment; recognising side-effects and adverse reactions, and selecting appropriate responses to such eventualities; recognising and managing a healing crisis; assessment and management of individual progress during treatment; variation of herbal prescription according to individual response and level of treatment success; factors determining length of treatment to be undertaken.

3 *Contingent Factors:*

Supporting therapies and the role they may play in successful treatment; if and when to refer, or recommend supplementary or alternative therapies; how to interact with other practitioners, including the medical profession.

Assessment

Assessment should consist of examination as well as a written project or thesis on a specific subject of the student's choice. Examination also to include a viva as well as written examination. Full assessment in this curriculum will only be possible by linking also to Core Curriculum no.9, Clinical Practice.