

Pharmacognosy and Medicinal Plants

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Cannabis a new beginning!

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Cannabis is probably the most researched plant in the world at the moment and it hasn't even got a monograph in a pharmacopoeia. The last time it had a monograph was in the British Pharmaceutical Codex of 1934 and this was for a tincture which is an alcoholic dilution of an extract made by immersing cannabis leaves and seeds in alcohol for a while. It was available on prescription until 1949. While the monograph cannabis contained both THC and CBD there are hybrids now which can produce very high THC with low CBD such as Dutch Skunk which has 18% THC and similar hybrids with THC below 0.2% and CBD contents of up to 24%. In USA cannabis is a recreational drug contains both THC and CBD whilst in U.K. cannabis with more than 0.2% THC is illegal but cannabis with only CBD is regulated as a foodstuff under EU rules. There are many novel dose forms of CBD, I have seen CBD oil in various strengths and sublingual sprays which deliver between 10 and one hundred mg per actuation, I tasted gummy bear children's sweets impregnated with 12Mg CBD and tablets and capsules of various strengths and I believe a skin patch exists. The serious growers of cannabis are mainly in the USA in Oregon and California. But there are growers in Slovakia, Poland Switzerland and Germany, I

am working with other groups growing cannabis in New York, Korea, Mozambique, Vietnam, Laos and U.K. There are two cannabis products registered and these are Epidolex and Sativex from GW Pharmaceuticals, one treats MS and the other Epilepsy and both work in the cannabinoid receptors. There is great scope for future licensing of cannabis derived medicines as people use CBD for pain, rheumatism, anxiety, depression and even cancer. They also use it just to feel good, so how many medicines do that? Tom Chapman is a Pharmacist who qualified when Pharmacognosy involved walking the Yorkshire Dales picking Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and an oral examination in Edinburgh on 10 different plants Tom has served on the British Pharmacopoeia herbal Committee and studied Traditional Chinese medicines and undertaken registration of THR traditional herbal remedies. At one point he was the largest producer of registered herbal medicines in the U.K. He edited the Herbal Extraction Manual produced by EU (DG7) and taught extraction of herbs in Africa for the Commonwealth secretariat. He designed and commissioned a herbal manufacturing plant for the King of Bhutan. He remains registered as a pharmacist and a QP and actively advises on cannabis.