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Quality control and standardization of herbal medicines - A dire need today

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Ever since the incorporation of Traditional Medicines in its programme in the year 1976, World Health Organization (WHO) has gone a long way for the worldwide promotion and development of different systems of Traditional Medicines and their best utilization in the health care services. In the recent years with ever-growing commercialization in the field of herbal medicines, there has been an instant demand for quality control of the drugs used in this system. For this standardization is usually recommended as the solution to the problem. But unfortunately, quite a number of these drugs are frequently adulterated with cheap, less potent and spurious plant materials either posing danger to the public health or not as efficacious as expected. The challenges are innumerable and enormous, making the global herbal market unsafe. This talk seeks to enlighten physicians, pharmacists, consumers and stakeholders in herbal medicine on the need to establish quality parameters for collection, handling, processing and production of herbal medicine as well as employ such parameters in ensuring the safety of the global herbal market. The processes of excellent quality assurance and standardization of herbal medicines and herbal medicinal products will be discussed. In the present study an attempt has been made to deal a clear understanding for research on medicinal plants starting from good agricultural practices(GAP); good cultivation practices (GCP); good field collection practices(GFCP); technical planning; population density; geographical distribution; topographical maps; collecting techniques & procedures; source and period of collection; identification; storage; chemical standardization; assay; good manufacturing practices (GMP) adulteration of hidden ingredients/synthetic drugs in herbal medicine; pre-clinical studies to clinical approach, with special reference to maintain standardization at every stage and subsequent production of quality herbal medicinal products (HMP).

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