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Nutritional Supplements

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Editor

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ALOE VERA

internal and external first aid

Although there are over 200 species of aloe grown around the world, the only two of consequence grown commercially are Aloe Barbadosis Miller and Aloe Aborescense, according to the International Aloe Science Council, Inc. (IASC), in Fort Worth, Texas. Since the 1950s, the aloe vera gel has gained respect as a nutritional drink, a moisturizer, a healing agent and an over-the-counter medicinal product.

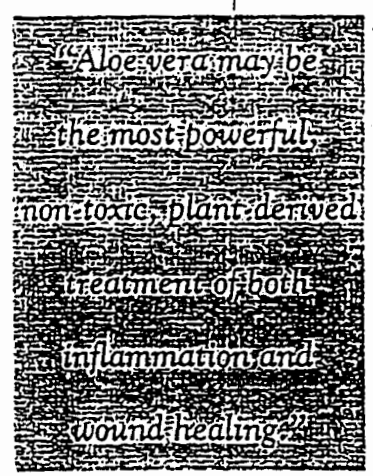
The IASC held their 13th Annual Scientific Seminar July 21-23, 1994 in Irving, Texas. One of the speakers, Robert H. Davis, Ph.D., of the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine in Philadelphia, reviewed the work that he and his colleagues have been doing with aloe vera for inflammation and wound healing. In 1935, Davis said, Collins and Collins were the first to report that aloe vera had effectively healed a woman's X-ray-induced dermatitis. Aloe also successfully treats burns and irradiation-induced ulcers, he reported.

"Aloe vera may be the most powerful, non-toxic, plant-derived treatment of both inflammation and wound healing," according to Davis. "Presently, hydrocortisone is a most effective treatment for inflammation. For this reason, physicians often use hydrocortisone clinically.

"However," Davis said, "while inhibiting inflammation, hydrocortisone blocks wound healing. Therefore, treatments using hydrocortisone to treat in-

flammation present physicians with a conflicting dilemma. When treating wounds, it becomes necessary to counteract the anti-wound healing properties of hydrocortisone."

There are over 200 biological agents in aloe vera, Davis added. His laboratory is now attempting to define the contributions of these agents to aloe's overall effects. First to be studied are its sterol properties.



In the early 1990s, Maurice C. Kemp, Ph.D., a visiting scientist at Texas A&M University at College Station, and colleagues at other facilities, began investigating a complex carbohydrate compound purified from the aloe vera plant, which appears to help drugs such as azidothymidine (AZT) and acyclovir (ACY) block the pathology associated with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and herpes simplex virus (HSV), according to

Gene Charleton, chief science and medical writer at Texas A&M. The research team found that the compound — acemannan — interfered with HIV's ability to reproduce in infected cells.

Of special interest to the researchers was how acemannan affects the immune system's response to a viral infection. They also wanted to know how the substance affects the ability of ACT and ACY to block the spread of HIV and HSV.

The Food and Drug Administration has recently given a Texas laboratory — which isolated acemannan in 1984 — permission to begin human trials on HIV and AIDS patients using their trademarked acemannan compound, reported the Fall 1994 issue of *The Journal*, a publication of the IASC.

Phase I of the trials will begin in a few months and follow on the heels of a Canadian government-sponsored Phase III study, which used oral acemannan in their human trials, conducted at the Texas Health Science Center in Houston. They also conducted a "safety study" using injectable acemannan, the publication reported.

"As *The Journal* understands the action of acemannan, it is not a 'cure' for AIDS," the publication said. "Rather, it arrests the syndrome's progression, enabling the patient to live out a more or less normal life span, when used in conjunction with AZT."

The Texas laboratory is not releasing details of its treatment program un-

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Until it has been completed, the results certified by the FDA and permission to market the product is granted. In the meantime, the USDA has approved an injectable form of acemannan as a treatment for fibrosarcoma in cats and dogs. And the Texas laboratory produces OTC aloe vera products for wounds and as a nutritional supplement.

People with severe allergies and long-standing digestive complaints often need temporary digestive support, according to James Braly, M.D., in *Dr. Braly's Food Allergy and Nutrition Revolution*. In addition to capsules containing hydrochloric acid with pepsin, pancreatic digestive tablets and potassium and sodium bicarbonate, he recommends aloe vera juice. Three to four ounces of juice — diluted with water if preferred — should be taken 15 to 20 minutes before meals.

"This will aid in protein digestion and take some of the burden off the hydrochloric acid- and pepsin-depleted stomach," Braly said.

Aloe vera gel capsules, available in natural food stores, are an effective natural way to encourage a bowel movement in those with constipation, reported Robert M. Giller, M.D., in his book *Natural Prescriptions*. The capsules are a natural stimulant for moving the bowels, he added, and he recommends that users follow directions on the label.

Although the evidence is anecdotal, Lynn L. Pearson, M.D., who has worked at two Texas health centers, reported that an aloe vera cream is used at one center for chicken pox, fever blisters, severe joint pain and ant bites. He added that the cream's anti-inflammatory effect is impressive and that it continues to be the treatment of choice for these injuries.

The medical facility is located in the logging area of East Texas, where patients are often brought in with extensive burns from flash fires and gasoline. After the burns are cleansed to prevent infection, the aloe vera cream is applied. This, according to Pearson, keeps down the infection, speeds up the initial healing process and decreases pain.

While at another Texas medical center, Pearson said that, "The cream con-

tinues to be superb in the treatment of superficial skin abrasions, wound healing and anti-inflammatory involvement of small joint arthritis (i.e., knees, hands and elbows).

He went on to say that he had had two patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) who were given purified aloe vera juice. Each patient, he said, has gone into remission and they have gained a measurable amount of strength. One patient has been in remission for over a year, he added.

Health food stores have aloe vera gels, juices, capsules, etc., and it is a familiar addition to skin lotions, creams, salves, shampoos and other health and beauty aids.

"In a recent national survey conducted by *Prevention* magazine among 5,000 of its readers, 97 percent of the respondents found aloe vera to be the 'most used' and 'most popular' herbal remedy, getting top marks for its ability to soothe and heal minor burns," reported *LASC's Journal*.

(References available on request.)

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