

FRANK MURRAY,  
Editor

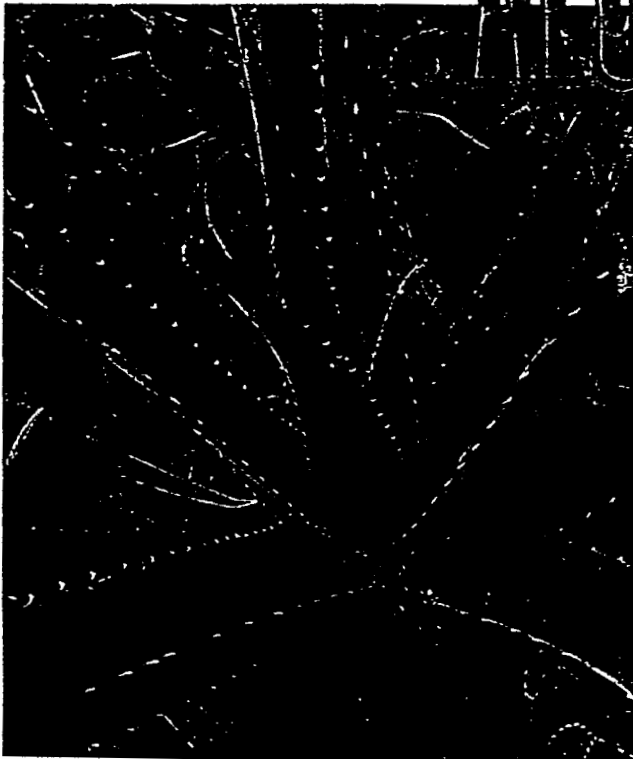
Researchers around the world, in Texas, Japan, Israel and elsewhere, are hard at work analyzing the many medicinal properties of the approximately 600 varieties of Aloe plants, which are being used successfully to treat burns, X-ray and radiation dermatitis, gastric ulcers, sunburn, frostbite, gastrointestinal disorders, constipation, sports injuries, diabetes, etc., as well as a therapeutic

Congress of Phytotherapy, October 15-19, 1991 in Seoul, Korea.

Heggers went on to say that the recurring legends about this tropical, yucca-like cactus have persisted since the 4th century B.C.; the beneficial effects of Aloe vera are mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus and in the writings of Hippocrates and Alexander the Great, Heggers added.

Aloe vera, of which Aloe barbadensis Miller is one of the best known varieties, is thought to have originated in the Cape Verde Islands, which are in the Atlantic Ocean west of Senegal, W. Africa. It is now grown throughout the world and is especially cultivated in Texas, California, Florida and Arizona.

# therapy and treatment with **ALOE VERA**



ingredient in cosmetics.

"The beneficial effects attributed to Aloe in the process of wound healing are so miraculous as to seem more like myth than fact," stated John P. Heggers, Ph.D., and colleagues of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston in Phytotherapy Research in 1993.

Phytotherapy Research 7, published by John Wiley &

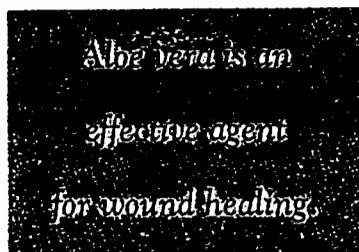
"For many years, products of Aloe vera, whether these are the fresh gel, juice or formulated products, have been used for health, medicinal and cosmetic purposes," said Yin-Tung Wang and Kimberly J. Strong, of Texas A&M University at Weslaco, in Phytotherapy Research.

They added that some people keep one or a few Aloe plants at home to provide a readily available gel source for treatment of burns and other wounds, while others purchase creams, ointment, juice, etc., to meet their first-aid needs.

One of the reasons why Aloe vera is so beneficial is its varying amounts of protein (at least 22 amino acids); complex carbohydrates, such as polysaccharides, glucose, galactose and xylose; vitamins (B1, B2, B3, B6, B12, pan-

and anecdotes abound about the therapeutic value of Aloe vera in treating burns, the plant does have properties which could theoretically be beneficial to burn patients and the process of wound healing, said Heggers, et al. In both animal and human studies, the University of Texas research team found that, based on available data and their studies, Aloe vera is a substance of "enormous therapeutic potential." It penetrates injured tissue, relieves pain, is antiinflammatory and dilates capillaries, thereby increasing the blood supply to the injured area, they said.

In the human studies, the researchers treated burns, frostbite and lesions caused by inadvertent intra-ar-



terial drug abuse. They found that partial thickness burn wounds treated with Aloe extracts healed faster and had less tissue loss than patients treated with standard techniques. Similarly, frostbite wounds treated with Aloe extracts had "far less morbidity than those treated with conventional methods." And the drug-abuse patients treated with Aloe also had fewer complications than those given regular therapy.

The researchers explained that Aloe inhibits a devastating vasoconstrictor known as TxA2 and keeps it from being produced, while maintaining a balance between several prostaglandins, the powerful hormones that impact on pain, healing, etc.

In the November 1989 issue of the *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association*, Robert H. Davis, Ph.D., reported that Aloe vera is an effective oral and topical agent for wound healing. In an experiment involving wounded mice, Davis, who is with the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine in Philadelphia, reported that Aloe vera, when placed in the animals' drinking water, when compared with controls, showed a 62.5

percent reduction in wound diameter size. A 50.8 percent reduction was observed in animals given a 25 percent topical Aloe vera preparation.

Davis has been exploring the possible use of Aloe vera and vitamin C in the treatment of arthritis, according to *The Complete Book of Vitamins and Minerals for Health*. With rheumatoid arthritis, he said, the connective tissue called collagen breaks down. He believes that vitamin C, applied to the skin, may prevent or slow this tissue breakdown, thus reducing inflamma-

tion. And he believes that Aloe also has contributing healing properties.

Ian Tizard of Texas A&M University at College Station, who is on temporary assignment at the University of California at San Francisco, reported in the August 21, 1991 issue of *Medical Tribune* that acemannan, a compound in Aloe vera, "helps AZT (the AIDS drug) block the human immunodeficiency virus from spreading to other cells, and may interfere with HIV replication."

Tizard, who is still investigating this

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theory, said at that time that, "If clinical trials show acemannan to be effective, it may be possible to lower the dose of AZT considerably, reducing toxicity while getting the same beneficial effects."

Writing in *The Doctors' Vitamin and Mineral Encyclopedia*, Sheldon Saul Hendler, M.D., Ph.D., reported that Aloe juices and gels have been shown to have antibacterial and antifungal properties, and they appear to be active against a broad spectrum of microbes. As an example, he said, an extract of Aloe, carrisyne, has exhibited antiviral activity, inhibiting reproduction of herpes, measles and the HIV virus in test tubes. Further studies are underway to determine whether carrisyne may be helpful in the treatment of AIDS.

"There are a number of ways in which Aloe vera may produce therapeutic results," Hendler said. "Salicylates, which have both antiinflammatory and pain-killing characteristics, are found in Aloe. So is magnesium lactate, a substance which can inhibit histamine reactions of the sort that can cause, among other things, itching and irritation of the skin. In addition, an enzyme in Aloe has been found to be a bradykinin inhibitor in test tube experiments. Bradykinin produces pain in inflamed tissue."

He added that some HIV-infected and AIDS patients are regularly drinking an Aloe beverage that has a high content of carrisyne. He suggests that this therapy should be monitored by a professional.

Since Aloe contains at least two anti-diabetic active compounds, it helped the blood glucose level to be reduced to the fasting level in diabetic mice, according to Hidehiko Beppu and colleagues in *Phytotherapy Research.*

When Aloe was given to diabetic patients, the fasting blood glucose level went down, said the researchers from Fujita Health University in Japan. The Aloe extracts had a similar effect on those suffering with hypoglycemia.

"These effects are attributed to the stimulation of insulin secretion from residual pancreatic islets beta-cells, but the mechanisms are still unknown," said the researchers.

In *Natural Health*, Natural

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Medicine, Andrew Weil, M.D., of the University of Arizona at Tucson, reported that Aloe vera is beneficial in the treatment of various gastrointestinal complaints. For diverticulitis, an inflammation of the walls of the colon, take Aloe vera gel after meals, staying below the dose that may cause any laxative effect.

For hemorrhoids, Weil advises to apply Aloe vera gel to the area frequently, and take one teaspoon of liquid Aloe vera after meals. For peptic, gastric or duodenal ulcers, he recommends one teaspoon of Aloe vera juice after meals. And for ulcerative colitis, he says to take a teaspoon of Aloe vera juice after meals, unless that amount is laxative.

Brooks Johnson, a track coach at Stanford University in California, said that they use Aloe vera much like DMSO for sprains and other sports injuries, according to Chuck Piper in the January 1983 issue of *Runner's World.*

"We clean off the area, crush some aspirin into a fine powder, then mix the two together and apply it to the injured area," Johnson said. "The Aloe vera penetrates right through the skin, taking the aspirin directly into the bloodstream. We've found it works a lot faster that way because it's not diluted."

Spanky Stephens, an athletic trainer at the University of Texas, added that freezing the gel and using it in conjunction with a methyl salicylate product and a cold hydrocollator can stop the peripheral bleeding and pain often associated with muscle strains and sprains. In this frozen state, it acts as an ice massage.

"Though Aloe vera's use as a healing agent is a novel idea, its application as a moisturizer is (also) well documented," Piper added. "Its high water and mineral content make it ideally suited for use as a skin cream and it can be found in a number of commercial beauty aids and suntan lotions. Its softening powers have recently been found to be helpful in breaking down calluses and blisters as well. One trainer even cured a severe case of athlete's foot through repeated applications of Aloe vera over a 3-day period."

In addition to being a natural moisturizer, Aloe vera acts as a natural cleansing agent for the skin and hair. Consequently, it is found in many health and beauty aids in the health food store.

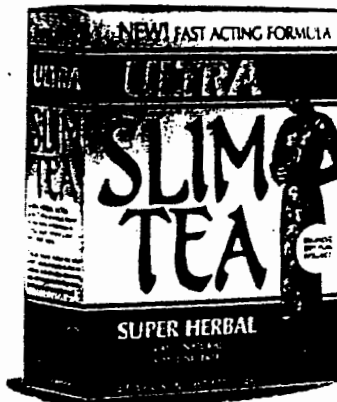
In addition to Aloe vera gels, beverages, capsules, etc., health food stores also carry Aloe vera creams, lotions, baby products, lip balms, shampoos and conditioners, moisturizers, soaps, suntan products, shaving products and many more.

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