



Introduction: Herbal products are commonly used by patients with cardiovascular diseases, but most of them do not share this information with their physicians. Although often considered harmless, herbal medicines may cause adverse cardiovascular effects from an ingredient, a contaminant, or a herb-drug interaction. Ignorance and or misinformation is largely responsible for this potentially dangerous situation. This abstract reviews the known cardiovascular dangers of commonly used herbal cardioceuticals.

Methods: Pubmed interrogation revealed 65,034 entries under 'herbal medicines', 2,963 under 'herbal and cardiovascular' and 3,750 under 'herbal toxicity'. Relevant citations were reviewed. Other pertinent published scientific material was also consulted.

Results:

Digoxin (*Digitalis purpurea*):



May cause bradycardia, heart block and ventricular tachyarrhythmias. These can be potentially fatal.

Dan-shen (Salviae Miltiorrhizae):



Potentiates blood thinner warfarin activity; may lower blood pressure.

Garlic (Allium sativum):



Increases the risk of bleeding especially when ingested as fresh garlic and when taken with blood-thinning drugs. May also lower blood pressure.

Maidenhair tree (Ginkgo Biloba):



Increases the risk of excess bleeding when taken with blood-thinning drugs. May abnormally raise or lower blood pressure.

Hawthorn (Crataegus):



Increases the risk of bleeding when taken with

blood-thinning drugs. May potentiate digitalis effect.

Conclusions: There has been an extensive evidence based review of the potential adverse effects of herbal remedies in the recent years. Some of these have identified dangerous cardiovascular effects. Dissemination of this information is critical. Patients should disclose herbal remedy use, and health care workers should discuss adverse effects of these naturoceuticals, and monitor and identify possible herb-drug interactions.

References:

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