

Ulbricht CE, Basch EM (Eds). **Herb and Supplement Reference. Evidence-Based Clinical Reviews.**

St Louis: Elsevier Mosby, 2005. 1012 pages. £ 75.99

ISBN 0-323-02994-9

Basch EM, Ulbricht CE (Eds). **Herb and Supplement Handbook. The Clinical Bottom Line.**

St Louis: Elsevier Mosby, 2005. 963 pages. £ 24.99

ISBN 0-323-02993-0

*Reviewed by MH Pittler, Exeter, UK*

These are two newly published titles by Natural Standards, which is known for its evidence-based approach in this field. They come well recommended and are produced by a respected publisher. Essentially both are very similar, with the Handbook being a shortened version of the Reference.

The latter is a comprehensive resource, which summarises the evidence from systematic reviews and clinical trials of herbs and supplements. Ninety-eight monographs provide data on the most commonly used herbs and supplements. They are based on systematic literature searches outlined in the methodology section of the introduction. Unfortunately no precise search date is provided but it seems that the searches were done at least up to 2003. Each monograph includes information on synonyms, a brief table on the scientific evidence, dosing, toxicology, adverse effects, precautions, contraindications, interactions, mechanism of action, history, discussion and review of the evidence and brands used in clinical trials. Monographs include acidophilus (lactobacillus), alfalfa, aloe, antineoplastons, arginine, artichoke, astragalus, barley, belladonna, betel nut, bilberry, bitter almond, bitter melon, black cohosh, black tea, bladderwrack/seaweed/kelp, blessed thistle, boron, bromelain, burdock, calendula, chamomile, chaparral, chasteberry, chondroitin, clay, clove, coenzyme Q10, cranberry, creatine, dandelion, danshen, devil's claw, DHEA, dong quai, Echinacea, elderberry and elder flower, ephedra, essiac, eucalyptus, evening primrose oil, eyebright, fenugreek, feverfew, fish oil/omega-3 fatty acids, flaxseed, garlic, ginger, ginkgo, ginseng, glucosamine, goldenseal, gotu kola, green tea, guggul, hawthorn, hops, horse chestnut, horsetail, hoxsey, kava, lavender, licorice, lycopene, maitake, marshmallow, melatonin, milk, thistle, niacin, oleander, passion flower, PC-SPEs, pennyroyal, peppermint, polypodium, leucotomos, propolis, psyllium, pycnogenol, pygeum, red clover, red yeast, saw palmetto, shark cartilage, slippery elm, soy, spirulina, st. John's wort, sweet almond, tea tree oil, thyme, turmeric (curcumin), valerian, white horehound, wild yam and yohimbe bark extract. In addition, there are 160 tables on specific health conditions at the back of this book.

The handbook is in many parts identical to the Reference but is more easily accessible and more user friendly. It provides the most essential information on safety, efficacy, interactions, and contains only key facts and key references.

Overall, this is an impressive collection of evidence on herbal and non-herbal dietary supplements. If I were to choose, I would go for the Handbook which seems to provide better value for money, but if you are keen to add a substantial heavyweight to your library, go large.