Evidence-based medicine (EBM) is defined as the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. The practice of EBM means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available clinical evidence obtained from systematic research. Much of this evidence comes from the Cochrane Collaboration, which specifies certain precepts pertaining to evidence: a) a comprehensive record, b) using randomized controlled trials (RCTs) as the gold standard for evidence, and c) using a hierarchy of evidence as one of the criteria for inclusion.

Michael Rotblatt, MD, PharmD and Irwin Ziment, MD, FRCP are to be commended for using these principles of EBM in their comprehensive references used to provide objective information for the 65 herbal medicines presented in *Evidence-Based Herbal Medicine* (Hanley & Belfus, Incorporated/October 2001). For each herbal medicine, there are sections on pharmacology, clinical trials, adverse effects, drug interactions, preparation, doses, and a reference list. From this information, they derive two ratings: 1) a benefit rating of 1 to 3, with 3 designating convincing evidence of clinical benefit and 1 indicating minimal or no benefit, and 2) a safety rating of + (plus) or – (minus), with a plus meaning safe and well-tolerated and minus indicating significant adverse effects.

Other chapters in the book are also well-written and include a discussion of the complex chemistry of plants and the quality of the products produced. The concept of evidence-based herbal medicine is needed to overcome the exaggerated and dangerous claims made for the efficacy and safety of herbal medicines. Drs. Rotblatt and Ziment have done an excellent job in this regard. This is an excellent book for all health care providers.

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