



Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists

Media Release

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SHOULD DOCTORS CHECK FOR HERBAL MEDICINE TOXICITY?

Prof Roger Byard from The University of Adelaide is proposing that a new research area should be developed in forensic herbal toxicology.

With the increase in use of herbal medicines over recent decades there is a need to know about their toxicity and compatibility with more traditional medicines. Prof Byard will present his proposal at ASCEPT's Annual Scientific Meeting in Perth on the 5 December.

Usually when an unexpected death occurs in the community investigating police officers are rigorous in recording prescription medicines that are found at the scene. This same process does not apply to herbal remedies. At least 66% of people don't tell their doctors what herbal medicines or supplements they are taking.

Herbal medicines have mostly come from complex Chinese and Indian medical traditions. While many of these have proven to be effective there is now a problem with traditional village-based activities expanding into a global market. This has had an effect on controlling the quality, composition and purity of supplies.

Research has shown that there has been contamination with heavy metals and pesticides and also interaction with prescription medications, and so it is now time to see if this plays a role in some deaths. Currently, forensic science does not usually include detection or measurement of herbal medicines in routine screening.

This research will be presented at the Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists (ASCEPT) Annual Scientific Meeting.

National and international leaders in pharmacology and toxicology are meeting in Perth between the 4th and 7th December 2011 to discuss the latest research on drugs and chemical safety.

The [program](#) of plenary lectures, symposia and workshops, [oral presentations and posters](#) will be academically and scientifically stimulating and lead to new collaborations and research opportunities. [Annual awards and prizes](#) will also be presented at this meeting.

Ends.

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