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Review by Steve Helms, ND

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Natural Standard is quickly becoming one of the premier names for resource texts concerning dietary supplements. Two Natural Standard texts appeared in 2005 – *Herb & Supplement Reference: Evidence-Based Clinical Reviews* and the abridged *Herb & Supplement Handbook: The Clinical Bottom Line*. These authoritative references are up-to-date, contain the latest evidence-based information, and provide valuable resources for both clinicians and researchers.

The hardcover "Reference" volume covers 97 monographs, while the "Handbook" includes all but six – artichoke, bitter melon, Boswellia, chasteberry, eyebright, and sorrel. These monographs are generally five pages in length, although some, like melatonin, are closer to 30 pages. Both texts are organized in the same heading and subheading structure that allows quick extraction of key information. Headings include: Dosing/Toxicology, Adverse Effects/Precautions/Contraindications, Interactions, Mechanism of Action, and Review of Evidence. Dosing/Toxicology, for example, is subdivided to provide prescription dosages for dried preparations, tinctures, and capsules/tablets, as well as information on pediatric dosing, standardization and toxicology. The utility of the hardcover Reference is most apparent in the Review of Evidence section where the addition of tables adds to the thorough written discussion of the clinical studies. This tabular format categorizes the studies according to pathology, and includes type of study, the number of participants, dosage, length of trial, and indicators of significance. This format allows the practitioner to access and compare the examined protocols, facilitating appropriate prescribing.

The appendices in both texts are identical and reveal lists of known and possible interactions (e.g., potential hypo- or hyperglycemic properties, known and potential diuretic effects, and inhibitors/inducers of specific cytochrome p450 enzymes).

The true limiting factor to the use of these texts is only the lack of scope. For, although the Eclectic prescription for botanicals is often noted under the heading "historical or theoretical uses that lack sufficient evidence," none of the naturopathic mechanisms of action are discussed – alterative, demulcent, etc. Therefore, these references are not designed to be exhaustive, but are geared for the majority of physicians looking for solid foundational data.

Natural Standard has set a new standard for rigor and thoroughness in reviewing the recent clinical research and presenting this information in a useable format. These evidence-based volumes are a welcome and needed resource that will instill confidence in the pharmacological prescribing of dietary supplements.