
Over three decades of phytochemistry- where are the phytomedicines?

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In our Natural Products research at the Department of Chemistry, University of Nairobi, we have studied many medicinal plants from different taxa- families, genera and species. We have isolated pure compounds whose structures we established as known, new or novel which have helped characterize the species more; the information has been applicable as taxonomic markers, helping in enhancing “natural taxonomy”. New or novel structures have introduced new compounds in Chemical knowledge which can be used for different technological applications either sourced through synthesis or agronomy of hitherto wild species and isolation. Moreover we have indicated there potential applications in medicine and agriculture by performing *in vitro* and even *in vivo* assays of activity against certain organisms.

However there is the constant prod during presentations that Natural Products Chemistry on traditional medicinal plants, should yield phytomedicines that can be used in the modern drug setting. This requires formulation of extracts or pure compounds into tablets, capsules or syrups through addition of excipients and then powdering, tableting, encapsulating, or suspending in a fluid. Such formulations must undergo dose and toxicological assessment; these are in the realm of Pharmacy but we can access them through collaboration. We believe there is modicum of justification for these prods and we are undertaking the challenge and find that our accumulated earlier information is an important resource.