

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HERBAL PRODUCTS AND MEDICINES

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The Decree 10 August 2018 "Regulation of the use in food supplements of herbal substances and preparations" clarified the notification procedures for food supplements containing herbal substances and preparations. The Decree stresses the importance of discussing any interactions between herbal preparations or extracts and medicines; especially for the most common concomitant therapies possibly used by the patients. We conducted a literature search to study the available sources of information concerning interactions of herbal preparations. In Google Scholar we found 228,000 references, while on Toxnet and PubMed only 1,791 and 28 references were retrieved respectively. This discrepancy depends on the nature of the references and the difficulty in collecting properly documented information on such interactions. The vast majority of references were poorly documented web mentions. Much attention is needed to this topic and rightly the Decree requests targeted literature research. Food supplements are often used on the basis of advice collected on the internet by people who ignore the possible toxicity of such preparations, which are considered intrinsically safe because they are "natural". Therefore, we recommend a greater care in advising the use of herbal preparations for therapeutic purposes and suggest defining the sources of information that are authorized to provide advice for the use of herbal preparations.