

Can the term Phytosensology be preferred over the term Organoleptic?

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Pharmacognosy is a multidisciplinary subject involving the organoleptic (sensory characters), botanical, physical, chemical, and biological (pharmacological) characters of crude drugs. Of the above-mentioned five parameters, [Figure 1] except for the term organoleptic, the remaining four parameters/terms represent the four different branches of Science such as botany, physics, chemistry, and pharmacology, respectively.

The term organoleptic literally means the impression on five sense organs of man, namely, eyes, nose, tongue, ears, and touch. Organoleptic evaluation is a qualitative method wherein the worker (pharmacognosist) uses his sense organs to study the characteristic features of crude drugs, especially the crude drugs of plant origin. In this method, the worker uses the sense of sight, smell, taste, hearing, and feeling, to study the crude drugs and records data such as size, shape, colors (external and internal), markings, fractures, texture, odor, taste, and so on. The methodology involved in this study is known as Organoleptic in general and the data obtained is referred to as Sensory characters in particular.

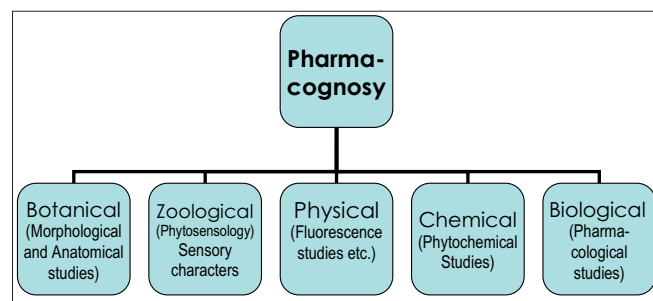


Figure 1: Different parameters used in Pharmacognosy

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As Organoleptic study is entirely based on the sense organs of Man, who is an important member of animal kingdom, the term Zoological may be aptly applied for this study in a broader sense. Furthermore, the term Zoological brings uniformity among the pharmacognostic parameters.^[1] However, in a strict sense, a specific name is required to replace or to represent the Organoleptic study, as the term Organoleptic is unimpressive and unfamiliar to the readers. Keeping this in mind, the author has coined a new term by combining two familiar words, namely, 'phyto' which means plants and 'sensology' which means the study of senses/sense organs of Man. In short, the new term, 'Phytosensology,' may be defined as 'the study of plants or plant parts (vegetable crude drugs) using Sense organs'. This term is coined on the basis of the term Phytochemistry (study of chemicals that are present in plants).

It should be noted that the vegetable crude drugs are dealt with not only by scientific persons such as academicians, researchers, drug manufacturers, and the like, but also by non-scientific persons such as plant cultivators, collectors, dealers, traders, exporters, and so on., who are, in fact, part and parcel of the crude drug industry. Furthermore, among the different pharmacognostic methods/parameters, the so-called Organoleptic study (Sensory characters) is the only method/parameter that involves neither scientific instruments nor any expenses. Even a layman can very well understand this method/parameter and apply the same on the spot, for the identification of vegetable crude drugs. Hence, this study is to be considered as a people friendly method/a layman parameter with regard to the identification of vegetable crude drug samples.

In the light of the above-mentioned facts and in the view of standardization of terminology, it is suggested that the term 'Organoleptic' may henceforth be renamed/rewritten as 'Phytosensology' (Sensory characters) in a strict sense and Zoological (Phytosensology) in a broader sense. The proposed term is expected to bring uniformity among the other pharmacognostic parameters

by representing one of the major branches of Science, namely, Zoology on one hand and familiarity/popularity on the other. A schematic representation of the different parameters of the pharmacognostic study (including the new terms/suggested terms) is furnished herewith for easy understanding of the readers.

It is further suggested that before renaming the term 'Organoleptic' as 'Phytosensology', it could be discussed among the pharmacognosists, to arrive at a suitable

conclusion in this regard.

REFERENCE

1. Selvam ABD. Can the term Organoleptic be considered equivalent to Zoological?. Phcog Mag 2006;2:200-1.

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