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Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Volume 2013, Article ID 964149, 11 pages

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/964149>



Review Article

Historical Aspects of Propolis Research in Modern Times

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Received 6 March 2013; Revised 29 March 2013; Accepted 29 March 2013

Academic Editor: Zenon Czuba

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Abstract

Propolis (bee glue) has been known for centuries. The ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians were aware of the healing properties of propolis and made extensive use of it as a medicine. In the middle ages propolis was not a very popular topic and its use in mainstream medicine disappeared. However, the knowledge of medicinal properties of propolis survived in traditional folk medicine. The interest in propolis returned in Europe together with the renaissance theory of ad fontes. It has only been in the last century that scientists have been able to prove that propolis is as active and important as our forefathers thought. Research on chemical composition of propolis started at the beginning of the twentieth century and was continued after WW II. Advances in chromatographic analytical methods enabled separation and extraction of several components from propolis. At least 180 different compounds have been identified so far. Its antibacterial, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, antifungal, anesthetic, and healing properties have been confirmed. Propolis has been effectively used in treatment of dermatological, laryngological, and gynecological problems, neurodegenerative diseases, in wound healing, and in treatment of burns and ulcers. However, it requires further research that may lead to new discoveries of its composition and possible applications.

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