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ANTICANCER ACTIVITY OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AND HERBS

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Introduction

Cancer is a malignant disease that affects various parts of the body. This disease can be characterised by rapid and uncontrolled proliferation of abnormal cells which form a tumor. Sometimes the process of proliferation of these cancer cells is arrested naturally or by chemotherapeutic agents. If the process is not arrested, it may progress until the death of the organism. Cancer cells have a character of immortality and they continue to grow invading nearby tissues and metastasizing to distant parts of the body. Metastasis is the most lethal aspect of carcinogenesis (McNutt. 1995). In 2007, cancer claimed the lives of approximately 7.8 million people in the world (Table-1). After the cancer of uterine cervix, breast cancer is the second most common cancer in Indian women. Similarly, Prostate cancer in men is the second most frequently diagnosed cancer.

Recent studies show that most of the cases of cancer are due to changes in the DNA that reduces the normal control over the cell growth, development and apoptosis. These changes are more likely to be genetic or may occur in the person infected by chronic viruses. It may occur due to the exposure to carcinogenic chemicals or radiations which lead to failure of immune system to eliminate cancer cells at early stage in proliferation.



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