Clinical correspondence

Eschscholzia californica and spasmodic cough

To the editor:

For many years I was never impressed with Eschscholzia (California poppy) until a heavy mycoplasma pneumonia went around these parts back in the 1990s. Many patients experienced spasmodic, dry, unproductive coughing leading to secondary infections, and aching sore coughing muscles. Many people I knew here in Oregon had it, and it spread all along the western coastal U.S. states. It left many with lung damage and a 4-6 week recovery period. The MDs around here were giving codeine/decongestant syrup, which actually exacerbated the underlying dryness, and didn’t stop the coughing fits.

I had family members who couldn’t stop coughing long enough to sleep. I tried Valeriana, Scutellaria, Pedicularis and any other antispasmodics I could find. I tried Lobelia in increasing dosages to nausea, but coughing spasms continued. As a last ditch effort I mixed some Eschscholzia into the mix and it worked. Even Eschscholzia alone seemed to work better than the other herbs. I was quite surprised. I now consider that the alkaloids found in this plant are specific for coughing.

A recent case of H1N1 Swine flu (virus identity confirmed by an MD) lingered for 4 weeks and developed into pleurisy, with continued chronic coughing. The client took a tincture of equal parts of Verbascaum and Eschscholzia, one teaspoon every 2-3 hours and didn’t cough again for eighteen hours, and then only coughing a few times a day.

I use whole fresh flowering plant tincture. I have used either just the above-ground flowering parts or the whole fresh plant with roots. The whole plants with root appears to have more constituents and a different flavor than just the above ground parts. Both appear effective for the spasmodic coughing.

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