

ranean-type diet significantly reduced the incidence of sudden death by coronary heart disease (70% in 2 years follow-up and 33% in 5 years).

The results of the use of phytotherapy, phytotherapy, and biologically active substances for the treatment of chronic diseases were also discussed. "Clinical Phytotherapy and Phytotoxicity Therapy of Cardiovascular Diseases" was presented by medical researchers from the Hospital of the Scientific Center of Russian Academy of Sciences by K. Treskunov, PhD, and others. It has been demonstrated that application of medicinal plants such as German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita* L., Asteraceae), plantain leaf (*Plantago major* L., Plantaginaceae), peppermint (*Mentha x piperita* L., Lamiaceae), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* L., Asteraceae), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum* L., Clusiaceae), common speedwell (*Veronica officinalis* L.,

Scrophulariaceae), alpine cranberry, (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea* L., Myrtaceae), and nettles (*Urtica dioica* L., Urticaceae) has a beneficiary effect in the case of infarction of the myocardium (heart attack). It was also stated that experience has demonstrated that the effective long-term usage of herbs for chronic cardiovascular diseases has produced no major adverse side effects.

The scientists of the Functional Foods Center at D&A Inc., B. Feldkoren, PhD, B. Mansouri, PhD, and D. Martirosyan, PhD, emphasized the significant role of a daily diet during the occurrence of cardiovascular diseases. They discussed the possibility of creating new functional food products with a view to prevent cardiovascular diseases. It was indicated that the natural food products created by the Functional Foods Center differ from the foods generally available in the American market in relation to their levels of fat, cholesterol, and sodium. In

addition, these new food products are rich in cellulose, micro and macro elements, especially in magnesium, which plays a very important role for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. It was proved that non-traditional vegetable crops amaranth and quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd., Chenopodiaceae) used in South America for over 5000 years, could serve as a possible source.

In conclusion, cardiovascular diseases are a problem not only for the specialists in the field of medicine, but also for the specialists of medical biology, botany, and the food industry. For the creation of new and effective functional food products, an interdisciplinary approach is needed. More conferences on this subject are being planned. More information is available at www.functionalfoodscenter.net. 🌱

International Kava Conference Held in Fiji: Attendees Request Removal of All International Restrictions for Kava

by Joerg Gruenwald, PhD

About 120 participants from 16 countries met from November 30th to December 2nd in Suva, Fiji, to discuss the current state of the art research on the traditional South Pacific herb kava (*Piper methysticum* Forst., Piperaceae) and the recent economic problems for various nations in the South Pacific region since the bans on kava in some European countries and elsewhere.

The conference was chaired by Ralph Edwards, MD, director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Drug Monitoring Centre in Uppsala and by Vincent Lebot, PhD, from CIRAD (Center for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development) in Vanuatu. Thirty-five presentations focused on the safety of kava, specifically on the alleged hepatotoxic effects of kava extracts.

New results from two German research teams of Professor Rolf Gebhardt of the University of Leipzig and Katrien Schaefer, PhD University Hannover, who investigated different kava extracts in cell cultures of liver cells, concluded that there was no hepatotoxicity demonstrated in any dosages related to human consumption. Also, the re-analysis of the human case reports with liver toxic effects were discussed in a critical manner. The researchers agreed that a maxi-

mum of three liver toxicity cases could be directly linked to kava's effects, which is extremely low considering the widespread use of kava, specifically compared to various conventional pharmaceutical drugs used in the area of anxiety such as benzodiazepines. There was also overall agreement that the traditional form of kava, i.e., water-dissolved kava powder, has never shown any signs of severe side effects.

The conference was supported by the governments of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, all of which are implementing specific kava legislation to ensure that only high-quality kava of the proper botanical varieties, the correct plant parts, and the appropriate forms of preparation are used for export.

The International Kava Conference IKC 2004 was organized by the International Kava Executive Council (IKEC); the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji; the Fiji School of Medicine; the Republic of the Fiji Islands; and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat. Main sponsors of the conference were the Centre for the Development of Enterprise and PRO€INVEST, two institutions of the ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) group of states, and the European Union.

The participants decided on a resolution

with three major statements and a number of scientific resolutions, which can be found on the IKEC homepage (www.ikec.org). The main statements are as follows:

"That, after the deliberations and presentation of new scientific evidence during the Conference, we see no grounds for the continuing bans and restrictions. We therefore call for their immediate removal by all the relevant regulatory authorities including those in the EU."

"The Pacific Island kava-producing countries need to be urgently supported in their efforts to strengthen the kava industry and re-establish its export markets."

"The Pacific Island Countries are committed to producing quality products by establishing and maintaining internationally recognized standards and specifications." 🌱

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