

Tracing Our Roots

By Sonja Eagle



Tracing Our Roots: Digitalis

Digitalis purpurea, also known as Foxglove, which Digoxin is derived from. While the plant's medicinal properties were likely known of for centuries, they were first published about in the late 1700's to treat congestive heart failure, known in those times as 'dropsy.

Norn S, Kruse PR. Hjerteglykosider: Fraoldtiden over Witherings digitalis til endogen glykosider [Cardiac glycosides: From ancient history through Withering's foxglove to endogenous cardiac glycosides]. *Dan Medicinhist Arbog*. 2004. 119-32. Danish. PMID: 15685783.



Tracing Our Roots: Camellia

Camellia sinensis. The medication Theophylline was first extracted from the tea leaves of *C. sinensis* in the late 1800's. It was initially used as a diuretic, and then later discovered as and converted into an asthma/COPD treatment.

Wettengel R. Theophyllin-Rückblick, Standortbestimmung und Ausblick [Theophylline—past present and future]. Arzneimittelforschung. 1998. 48(5A):535-9. German. PMID: 9676340.



Tracing Our Roots: Cinchona

Cinchona ledgeriana. Quinine (and quinidine) was originally isolated from this tree's bark and used to treat malaria from as early as the 1600's. It used to be referred to as the "Jesuits' bark," "cardinal's bark," or "sacred bark." In the first several hundred years of its discovery, the plant was ground up and often drunk in wine.

Achan J, Talisuna AO, Erhart A, Yeka A, Tibenderana JK, Baliraine FN, Rosenthal PJ, D'Alessandro U. Quinine. An old anti-malarial drug in a modern world: role in the treatment of malaria. Malar J. 2011. 10:144. PMID: 21609473.

“ ‘Tracing Our Roots’ is a collection of illustrations of plants that are the original sources of three pharmaceuticals. I work in Emergency Medicine, but my parents are licensed practitioners of natural, Alternative Medicine fields. I was raised with herbal remedies and acupuncture. I took Gan Mao Ling for colds and discovered Tylenol for the first time in college. Working in a bleached Emergency Room crowded with fluorescent lights, plastic gowns and metal machines, these watercolors are a reminder of the natural ancestry of pharmaceutical breakthroughs. They reflect both modern medicine’s roots, and my own. Pictured are Digitalis Purpurea, Camellia Sinensis, and Cinchona Ledgeriana, the origins of Digoxin, Theophylline, and Quinine, respectively.”

Sonja Eagle is a resident physician in Emergency Medicine at Stanford. She studied engineering and worked as a computer programmer prior to entering medical school. She believes that Medicine is an art, and also enjoys drawing and painting as a hobby. Her artwork can be found accompanying various medical literature and research.

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