

NAPRALERT: A DATABASE OF NON-NUTRIENT COMPONENTS IN PLANTS

Christopher W. W. Beecher, PhD
University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

ABSTRACT

The use of information management techniques in determining the presence of biologically active compounds in the diet will be reviewed. The literature suggests many classes of compounds that may have a significant biological effect on the people who consume them. Since they are often present in the diet from many of the more common foods, especially those of plant origin, it is likely that these compounds may be responsible for the epidemiologically-based beneficial health phenomena that are so commonly reported but only weakly understood. At a time when the level of vitamin supplementation means that few people in this country are likely to be seriously deficient, the presence of flavonoids, isoflavonoids, saponins, carotenoids and other classes of compounds in the diet may have as much to do with general health conditions as any other phenomema (habitual or environmental).