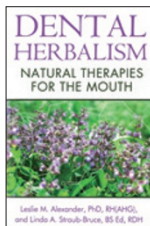


## BOOK REVIEW



## DENTAL HERBALISM – NATURAL THERAPIES FOR THE MOUTH

L. M. Alexander,  
L. A. Straub-Bruce

Healing Arts Press

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With a shift of focus in healthcare towards a holistic approach it falls on us, as dental professionals, to familiarise ourselves with complementary techniques, so as to better advise our patients of the options with regards to their oral health.

Part one of this easy-to-read guide of all things herbal explores the anatomy of the head and neck, providing a guide to the oral cavity and an introduction to the dental team. It establishes the importance of prevention, including plaque control and diet advice, and this is a recurrent theme throughout the book.

Part two explores the oral cavity's journey from infancy to old age, with 49 common conditions that may be encountered along the way, reminding the reader of the importance of attending their dentist, and the dangers of self-diagnosis.

Part three is a whirlwind tour of everything herbal, profiling 41 herbs that the authors feel should be integral to a herbalist's 'material medica'. It provides properties, indications, cautions and preparations, and puts the herbs into action, explaining how they can be applied in different situations.

The book closes with an overview of general issues affecting oral health and examines the link between oral health and systemic disease. It controversially includes a summary of 18 contentious issues that

affect oral health, with fluoride and amalgam noticeable mentions. The authors highlight this is an area they had difficulty in writing, and remind the reader that health-related decisions are always a personal choice.

The book implores safety and aims not to replace professional care or provide diagnoses. It reminds readers that although herbs may often act as excellent symptom alleviators, they are rarely curative, and so must be used only in support of conventional dental treatment.

*Dental herbalism* undoubtedly provides sound basic knowledge for herbalists and for dental professionals exploring complementary therapies, however, I would advise caution in recommending this book to patients as I feel aspects may challenge and contradict our professional advice. With regards to fluoride, although not condemning its use, it in no way highlights its importance in caries prevention, and, even with the safety warnings in '*Dental Herbalism*', I still worry patients may potentially delay seeking treatment and the correct diagnosis.

S. CONROY

## BDA MUSEUM

## 'FATHER OF BDA' TURNS 200

This month marks the bicentenary of the birth of Sir John Tomes (1815-1895): inventor, researcher, pioneer, reformer and father of the British Dental Association (BDA).

John Tomes was born on 21 March 1815 at Weston-on-Avon, Gloucestershire. In 1836, after a five-year apprenticeship with an apothecary in Evesham, he entered the medical schools of King's College and Middlesex Hospitals. During his training he extracted many teeth and although he was doing well at his medical studies, he decided to abandon them to pursue dentistry. At that time no qualification was needed to be a dentist. In 1840 he was appointed dental surgeon to King's College Hospital and opened his own practice in Marylebone. Three years later he became dental surgeon at Middlesex Hospital, where he gave a course of lectures on 'Dental Physiology and Surgery'. These were published in a book in 1848.

## Tomes' fibrils

Tomes began his research into teeth whilst still a medical student. He used objective data collection and personal experience as the basis for his papers. He kept a register at the hospital of every case he treated and used these to analyse which teeth were most at risk of disease. His advice on dental surgery was partly gleaned from his experience of removing the decayed portion of two of his own wisdom teeth and filling them with amalgam.

In 1838 he submitted his first paper to the Royal Society. It described the microscopic structure of human and animal teeth and compared teeth with bone. He submitted four more papers to the Royal Society between 1849 and 1856 and was elected a Fellow in

## VIEW FROM MY WINDOW

Gerald Feaver writes: 'A large floor to ceiling window which dates back to 1828 looks out from this Harley Street practice on to a typical London view.'

'In spite of being in the centre of London it is a quiet peaceful haven in the midst of the buzz and bustle of the city.'

Send the view from your window to [r.doherty@nature.com](mailto:r.doherty@nature.com).

