

## Janus Corner

### Looking Back



### Looking Forward

This occasional section within the journal surveys visions and achievements, often not on the main track of the developing biomedical sciences, but all relating to discoveries and developments of medicinals – both ancient and modern. What they have in common, in one way or another, is providing further background and glances around the edges of the core discipline of pharmacognosy, as it has been and continues to evolve within our times.



The 15<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the  
International  
Society for Ethnopharmacology



## Conference Notification

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Pharmacognosy Communications is pleased to announce its journal sponsorship of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the International Society for Ethnopharmacology, to be held at the Biet Zaman Hotel and Resort, Petra, Jordan between 5 and 8 May, 2015. The Congress will include plenary sessions with invited international and local

speakers, as well as parallel colloquia and poster sessions related to the following themes:

- Arabian ethnopharmacology.
- Arab-European intercultural ethnopharmacology.
- Pharmacological and clinical studies of medicinal plants and natural products.
- Ethnobotanical approach to drug discovery: strengths and limitations.
- Nutraceuticals and dietary supplements – traditional to modern.

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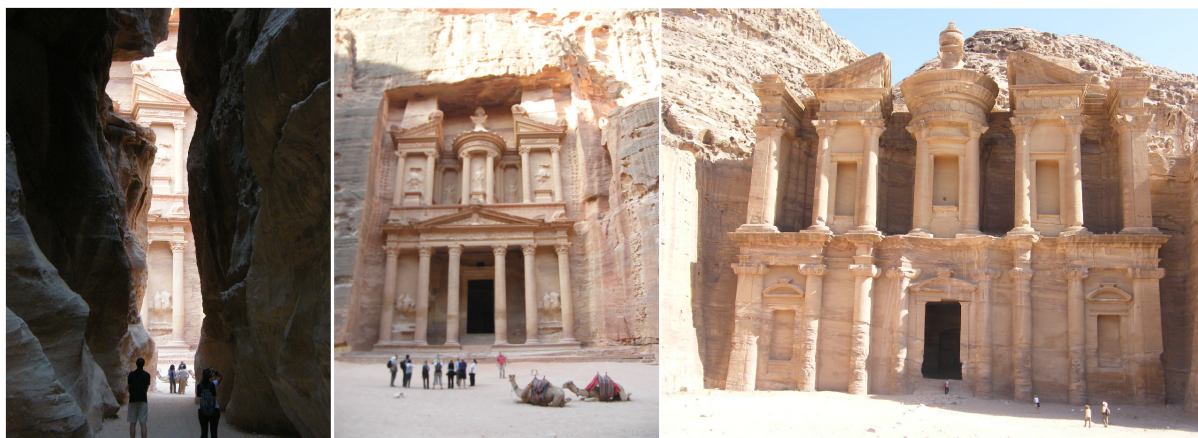
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- Biodiversity and ecological aspects of ethnobotanical sources.
- Theory and methodology in the study of ethnopharmacology.
- Traditional and modern herbal medicinal products in cosmetology.
- Traditional and modern herbal medicinal products in the treatment of cancer.
- The ethnoveterinary use of plants in animal health and productivity.
- Analytical assays and quality assurance of ethnopharmacological sources.

Details of the registration guidelines and instructions are available on Congress website (<http://15icse.bau.edu.jo/regise.aspx>). Full papers will be eligible for publication at

the authors request in *Pharmacognosy Communications* (subject to editorial review). The website also provides details regarding visa requirements, the conference venue and accommodation options.

For pre- or post- conference activities, Jordan presents an interesting variety of optional sights and activities for conference delegates. The city of Petra is world famous for its impressive UNESCO listed archaeological site, which is accessed through a narrow gorge known as the Siq. At the end of the gorge, visitors are confronted with the archaeological marvel of a building hewn directly from the sandstone. This is Al Khazneh (commonly known as the Treasury), the best known ruin of Petra and arguably the most impressive, although Al Dier (the Monastery) is also very impressive. The archaeological site is quite large and whilst the main features can be seen in a single visit, several days could easily be filled exploring the ancient city.



**Figure 1.** The Siq with a view of the Treasury at the end; Al Khazneh (The Treasury); Al Dier (The Monastery).

Away from the city of Petra, there are many other interesting regions worth visiting. Most international participants will arrive via air through Amman. The capital has a Roman amphitheatre, a citadel and a museum housing the Dead Sea Scrolls in its centre. The towns of Jerash (famous for its extensive Roman ruins), Karak (with its famous crusader castle) and Madaba (famous for Byzantine mosaics) are a relatively short distance from the capital. Similarly, the Dead Sea is an easy day trip from Amman. South of Petra, Wadi Rum (a desert famous for its association with Lawrence of Arabia and the Arab revolt against Ottoman rule) and Aqaba (Jordan's only coastal city) are possible regions worthy of a visit. I encourage you to register and submit your abstracts and I look forward to meeting you at Petra in May 2015.

# Cannabis and Cannabinoid Components Ease Symptoms Associated With Multiple Sclerosis

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Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an inflammatory disease in which neuronal myelin sheaths are disrupted, resulting in a loss of neuronal function. The subsequent disease symptoms are broad, ranging from loss of tactile sensitivity to muscle weakness and spasms, visual problems (e.g. nystagmus, double vision etc.), difficulty with speech, tiredness, chronic pain and bladder and bowel difficulties. Psychiatric disorders including depression and mood swings are also common. There is currently no cure for MS and current therapies aim at preventing attacks, returning function following an attack and preventing permanent disability. However, many of these treatments have questionable efficacy and are often toxic and/or have serious associated side effects. Many people with MS also use complementary and alternative medicines (CAM), either as a primary treatment modality, or as an adjunct to allopathic therapies. Most of these CAM treatments are unproven. A recent report in the journal *Neurology* reports on the efficacies of several CAMs.<sup>1</sup> Cannabis and several of its

chemical components (the cannabinoids) were highlighted as being effective against several MS symptoms including spasticity, pain and frequent urination. However, the authors noted that the use of medical marijuana also was associated with side effects including dizziness and retarded memory. However, given the severity of MS symptoms, it is likely that most sufferers would view these side effects as preferable to the symptoms of MS. The authors have cautiously recommended that cannabis and/or purified cannabinoids be offered to MS sufferers. Whilst more research is needed, the preliminary findings are promising.

## REFERENCE

1. Yadav V, Bever C, Bowen J, Bolwing A, Weinstock-Guttman B, Cameron M, Bourdette D, Gronseth GS, Narayanaswami P. Summary of evidence-based guideline: Complementary and alternative medicine in multiple sclerosis. Report of the Guideline Development Subcommittee of the American Academy of Neurology. *Neurology*. 2014; 82(12): 1083–92.

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