



Impact of Phytochemicals on the Gastrointestinal Tract— Implications for Innovative Nutraceutical and Functional Food Development

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Message from the Guest Editor

Many plants have a long history of empiric use to treat gastrointestinal ailments, including nausea and emesis, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, among others. One interesting case is *Cannabis sativa*, which, in addition to hundreds of psychotropic and non-psychotropic phytocannabinoids, contains many other interesting phytochemicals. Phytocannabinoids exert their actions through the modulation of the endocannabinoid system, which is broadly distributed in the gastrointestinal tract. However, the full spectrum of pharmacological actions on the gastrointestinal tract of Cannabis phytochemicals is far from clear. Furthermore, gastrointestinal effects of these compounds may be modulated by actions on the brain, the immune system or the endocrine system, among others. Phytochemicals found in Cannabis, their synthetic or semisynthetic analogues and other cannabinoid-like molecules (such as palmitoylethanolamide) may modify gastrointestinal tract functions and interfere with nutrition. Many of the compounds found in the plant can be considered nutraceuticals and can thus be used for the development of new functional foods able to prevent or improve gastrointestinal symptoms.





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