PHARMACOLOGICAL AND TOXICOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF
FRUITS OF PIPER CUBEBA

1. INTRODUCTION

Medicinal plants play a key role in the human health care. About 80% of the world population believes in the use of traditional medicines which are predominantly from the natural origin. Traditional medicines refer to a broad range of ancient, natural health care practices like folk/tribal medicine including Ayurveda, Siddha, Amachi and Unani. These medical practices originated from time immemorial and developed gradually to a large extent, by relying or based on practical experiences without significant references to modern scientific principles. Since about 80% of the total world’s populations reside in developing countries, about 64% of the total population utilizes plants as drugs. i.e. 3.2 billion people. It is estimated that about 7,500 plants are used in local health traditions in mostly, rural and tribal villages of India. Out of these, the real medicinal value of over 4000 plants is either little known or unknown to the mainstream population. Pharmaceutical preparations made by extracting plants with various solvents to yield tinctures, fluid extracts, extracts or the like are known as phytomedicinals which have been carefully standardized for their safety and efficacy (Nadkarni, et al., 1954). Herbal drugs play a vital role in ethno-medical practices as well as traditional system of medicine in India. In addition, plant derived natural products such as flavonoids, phenolic compounds; terpenoids, steroids etc. have received considerable attention in recent past due to their diverse pharmacological properties. The last two decades has a revival of interest in natural drugs and herbal products primarily because of the widespread belief that ‘green medicine’ is lesser toxic than synthetic/artificial products. It was suggested that the herbal medicines have been used for the treatment of various diseases with the aim to improve general health of the sufferer, and are believed to be cost effective and safer than the synthetic products.